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THE

MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN.

BY

CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF

"FORTUNES OF GLENCORE," "HARRY LORREQUER," "SIR JASPER CAREW,"
"MAURICE TIERNAY," "A DAY'S RIDE," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

When I had made my arrangement with my publishers for this new story, I was not sorry for many reasons to place the scene of it in Ireland. One of my late critics, in noticing "Roland Cashel" and "The Daltons," mildly rebuked me for having fallen into doubtful company, and half censured—in Bohemian—several of the characters in these novels. I was not then, still less am I now, disposed to argue the point with my censor, and show that there is a very wide difference between the persons who move in the polite world, with a very questionable morality, and those patented adventurers whose daily existence is the product of daily address. The more one sees of life, the more is he struck by the fact that the mass of mankind is rarely very good or very bad, that the business of life is carried on with mixed motives; the best people being those who are least selfish, and the worst being little other than those who seek their own objects with slight regard for the consequences to others, and even less scruple as to the means.

Any uniformity in good or evil would be the death blow to that genteel comedy which goes on around us, and whose highest interest very often centres in the surprises we give ourselves by unexpected lines of action and unlooked for impulses. As this strange drama unfolded itself before me, it had become a passion with me to watch the actors, and speculate on what they might do. For this, Florence offered an admirable stage. It was eminently cosmopolitan; and, in consequence, less under the influence of any distinct code of public opinion than any section of the several nationalities I might have found at home.

There was a universal toleration abroad; and the Spaniard conceded to the German, and the Russian to the Englishman, much on the score of nationality; and did not question too closely a morality which, after all, might have been little other than a conventional habit. Exactly in the same way, however, that one hurries away from the life of a city and its dissipations, to breathe the fresh air and taste the delicious quiet of the country, did I turn from these scenes of splendour, from the crush of wealth, and the conflict of emotion, to that Green Island, where so many of my sympathies were intertwined, and where the great problem of human happiness was on its trial on issues that differed wonderfully little from those that were being tried in gilded salons, and by people whose names were blazoned in history.

Ireland, at the time I speak of, was beginning to feel that sense of distrust and jealousy between the owner and the tiller of the soil which, later on, was to develop itself into open feud. The old ties that have bound the humble to the rich man, and which were hallowed by reciprocal acts of good-will and benevolence, were being loosened. Benefits were canvassed with suspicion, ungracious or unholy acts were treasured up as cruel wrongs. The political agitator had so far gained the ear of the people, that he could persuade them that there was not a hardship or a grievance of their lot, that could not be laid at the door of the landlord. He was taught to regard the old relation of love and affection to the owner of the soil, as the remnants of a barbarism that had had its day, and he was led to believe that whether the tyranny that crushed him was the Established Church or the landlord, there was a great Liberal party ready to aid him in resisting either or both, when he could summon courage for the effort. By what promptings the poor man was brought to imagine that a reign of terror would suffice to establish him in an undisputed possession of the soil, and that the best lease was a loaded musket, it is not either my wish nor my duty here to narrate; I only desire to call my reader's attention to the time itself, as a transition period when the peasant had begun to resent some of the ties that had bound him to his landlord, and had not yet conceived the idea of that formidable conspiracy which issues its death warrants and never is at a loss for the agents to enforce them. There were at the time some who, seeing the precarious condition of the period, had their grave forbodings of what was to come, when further estrangement between the two classes was accomplished, and the poor man should come to see in the rich only an oppressor and a tyrant. There was not at that time the armed resistance to rents, nor the threatening letter system to which we were afterwards to become accustomed, still less was there the thought that the Legislature would interfere to legalise the demands by which the tenant was able to coerce his landlord; and for a brief interval there did seem a possibility of reuniting once again, by the ties of benefit and gratitude, the two classes whose real welfare depends on concord and harmony.

I have not the shadow of a pretext to be thought didactic, but I did believe that if I recalled in fiction some of the traits which once had bound up the relations of rich and poor, and given to our social system many of the characteristics of the family, I should be reviving pleasant memories if not doing something more.

To this end I sketched the character of Mary Martin. By making the opening of my story date from the time of the Relief Bill, I intended to picture the state of the country at one of the most memorable eras in its history, and when an act of the Legislature assumed to redress inequalities, compose differences and allay jealousies of centuries' growth, and make of two widely differing races—one contented people.

I had not, I own, any implicit faith in Acts of Parliament, and I had a fervent belief in what kindness—when combined with knowledge of Ireland—could do with Irishmen. I have never heard of a people with whom sympathy could do so much; nor the want of it be so fatal. I have never heard of any other people to whom the actual amount of a benefit was of less moment than the mode it was bestowed. I have never read of a race who, in great poverty and many privations, attach a higher value to the consideration that is bestowed on them, than to the actual material boons; and feel such a seemingly disproportioned gratitude for kind words and generous actions.

What might not be anticipated from a revulsion of sentiment in a people like this? To what violence might not this passion for vengeance be carried—if the notion possessed them—that they, whom she called her betters, only traded on the weakness of their poverty and the imbecility of their good faith? It was in a fruitful soil of this kind that the agitation now sowed the seeds of distrust and disorder; and with what fatal rapidity the poison reproduced itself and spread, the history of late years is the testimony.

If such traits as I have endeavoured to picture in Mary Martin were engaged in the work of benevolence to-morrow, they would be met on every side by discouragement and defeat. The priest would denounce them as a propaganda artfully intended to sap the ancient faith of the people; the agitators would denounce them as the cunning flatteries of political solicitation; the people themselves would distrust them as covering some secret object; and the National Press would be certain to utter its warnings against whatever promised to establish peace or contentment to the land.

I have said already, and I repeat it here, that this character of Mary Martin is purely fictitious; and there is the more need I should say it, since there was once a young lady of this very name—many traits of whose affection for the people and efforts for their well-being might be supposed to have been my original. To my great regret I never had the happiness to have met her; however, I have heard much of her devotion and her goodness.

I am not sure that some of my subordinate characters were not drawn from life. Mrs. Nelligan, I remember, had her type in a little Galway town I once stopped at; and Dan Nelligan had much in common with one who has since held a distinguished place on the Bench.

Of the terrible epidemic which devastated Ireland—there was much for which I drew on my own experience. Of its fearful ravages in the west, in the wilds of Clare, and that lonely promontory that stretches at the mouth of the Shannon into the Atlantic, I had been the daily witness; and even to recall some of the incidents passingly was an effort of great pain.

Of one feature of the people at this disastrous time, I could not say enough; nor could any words of mine do justice to the splendid heroism with which they bore up, and the noble generosity they showed each other in misfortune. It is but too often remarked how selfish men are made by misery, and how fatal is a common affliction to that charity that cares for others. There was none of this here; I never in any condition or class recognised more traits of thoughtful kindness and self-denial, than I did amongst these poor, famished, and forgotten people. I never witnessed in the same perfection, how a wide-spread affliction could call up a humanity great as itself, and make very commonplace natures something actually heroic and glorious.

Nothing short of the fatal tendency I have to digression, and the watchful care I am bound to bestow against this fault, prevented me from narrating several incidents with which my own experience had made me acquainted. Foreign as these were to the burden of my tale, it was only by an effort I overcame the temptation to recall them.

If a nation is to be judged by her bearing under calamity, Ireland—and she has had some experiences—comes well through the ordeal. That we may yet see how she will sustain her part in happier circumstances is my hope and my prayer, and that the time be not too far off.

CHARLES LEVER.

TRIESTE, 1872.

THE

MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN.

CHAPTER I.

CRO' MARTIN.

I AM about to speak of Ireland as it was some four-and-twenty years ago, and feel as if I were referring to a long-past period of history, such have been the changes, political and social, effected in that interval! Tempting as in some respects might be an investigation into the causes of these great changes, and even speculation as to how they might have been modified, and whither they tend, I prefer rather to let the reader form his own unaided judgment on such matters, and will therefore, without more of preface, proceed to my story.

If the traveller leaves the old town of Oughterard, and proceeds westward, he enters a wild and dreary region, with few traces of cultivation, and with scarcely an inhabitant. Bare, bleak mountains, fissured by many a torrent, bound plains of stony surface,—here and there the miserable hut of some "cottier," with its poor effort at tillage, in the shape of some roods of wet potato land, or the sorry picture of a stunted oat crop, green even in the late autumn. Gradually, however, the scene becomes less dreary. Little patches of grass land come into view, generally skirting some small lake; and here are to be met with droves of those wild Connemara ponies, for which the district is so celebrated; a stunted, hardy race, with all the endurance and courage that beseem a mountain origin. Further on, the grateful sight of young timber meets the eye, and large enclosures of larch and spruce fir are seen on every favourable spot of ground. And at length, on winding round the base of a steep mountain, the deep woods of a rich demesne appear, and soon afterwards a handsome entrance-gate of massive stone, with armorial bearings above it, announces the approach to Cro' Martin Castle, the ancient seat of the Martins.

An avenue of several miles in length, winding through scenery of the most varied character, at one time traversing rich lawns of waving meadow, at another tracking its course along some rocky glen, or skirting the bank of a clear and rapid river, at length arrives at the Castle. With few pretensions to architectural correctness, Cro' Martin was, indeed, an imposing structure. Originally the stronghold of some bold Borderer, it had been added to by successive proprietors, till at last it had assumed the proportions of a vast and spacious edifice, different eras contributing the different styles of building, and presenting in the mass, traces of every architecture, from the stern old watch-tower of the fourteenth century to the commodious dwelling-house of our own.

If correct taste might take exception to many of the external details of this building, the arrangements within doors, where all that elegance and comfort could combine were to be found, might safely challenge criticism. Costly furniture abounded, not for show in state apartments, shrouded in canvas or screened from sunlight, but for daily use in rooms that showed continual habitation.

Some of the apartments displayed massive specimens of that richly-carved old oak furniture for which the Chateaux of the Low Countries were famed; others abounded with inlaid consoles and costly tables of "marqueterie," and others again exhibited that chaste white and gold which characterised the splendid era of the Regency in France. Great jars of Sèvres, those splendid mockeries of high art, stood in the windows, whose curtains were of the heaviest brocade. Carpets of soft Persian wool covered the floors, and rich tapestries were thrown over sofas and chairs with a careless grace, the very triumph of picturesque effect.

In the scrupulous neatness of all these arrangements, in the orderly air, the demure and respectful bearing of the servants as they showed the Castle to strangers, one might read the traces of a strict and rigid discipline—features, it must be owned, that seemed little in accordance with the wild region that stretched on every side. The spotless windows of plate-glass, the polished floor that mirrored every chair that stood on it, the massive and well-fitting doors, the richly gilded dogs that shone within the marble hearth, had little brotherhood with the dreary dwellings of the cottiers beyond the walls of the park—and certainly even Irish misery never was more conspicuous than in that lonely region.

It was early on a calm morning of the late autumn that the silent court-yard of the Castle resounded with the sharp quick tramp of a horse, suddenly followed by a loud shrill whistle, as a young girl, mounted upon a small but highly-bred horse, galloped up to one of the back entrances. Let us employ the few seconds in which she thus awaited, to introduce her to the reader. Somewhat above the middle size, and with a figure admirably proportioned, her face seemed to blend the joyous character of happy girlhood with a temperament of resolute action. The large and liquid hazel eyes, with their long dark fringes, were almost at variance with the expression of the mouth, which, though finely and beautifully fashioned, conveyed the working of a spirit that usually followed its own dictates, and as rarely brooked much interference.

Shaded by a broad-leaved black hat, and with a braid of her dark auburn hair accidentally fallen on her shoulder, Mary Martin sat patting the head of the wire-haired greyhound, who had reared himself to her side—a study for Landseer himself. Scarcely above a minute had elapsed, when several servants were seen running towards her, whose hurried air betrayed that they had only just risen from bed.

"You're all very late to-day," cried the young lady. "You should have been in the stables an hour ago. Where's Brand?"

"He's gone into the fair, Miss, with a lot of hoggets," said a little old fellow with a rabbit-skin cap, and a most unmistakable groom formation about the knees and ankles.

"Look to the mare, Barny," said she, jumping off, "and remind me, if I forget it, to fine you all, for not having fed and watered before six o'clock. Yes, I'll do it—I said so once before, and you'll see I'll keep my word. Is it because my uncle goes a few weeks to the sea-side, that you are to neglect your duty? Hackett, I shall want to see the colts presently; go round to the straw-yard and wait till I come; and, Graft, let us have a look at the garden, for my aunt is quite provoked at the flowers you have been sending her lately."

All this was said rapidly, and in a tone that evidently was not meant to admit of reply; and the gardener led the way, key in hand, very much with the air of a felon going to conviction. He was a Northern Irishman, however, and possessed the Scotch-like habits of prudent reserve, that never wasted a word in a bad cause. And thus he suffered himself to be soundly rated upon various short-comings in his department: celery, that wanted landing; asparagus grown to the consistence of a walking-cane; branches of fruit-trees breaking under their weight of produce; and even weed-grown walks, all were there, and upon all was he arraigned.

"The old story, of course, Graft," said she, slapping her foot impatiently with her riding-whip—"you have too few people in the garden; but my remedy will be to lessen their number. Now mark me. My uncle is coming home on Wednesday next—just so—a full month earlier than you expected—and if the garden be not in perfect order—if I find one of these things I have complained of to-day ——"

"But, my Leddy, this is the season when, what wi' sellin' the fruit, and what wi' the new shoots ——"

"I'll have it done, that's all, Mr. Graft; and you'll have one man less to do it with. I'll go over the hothouse after breakfast," said she, smiling to herself at the satisfaction with which he evidently heard this short reprieve. Nor was he himself more anxious to escape censure than was she to throw off the ungracious office of inflicting it.

"And now, for old Catty Broon, and a good breakfast to put me in better temper," said she to herself, as she entered the Castle and wended her way to the housekeeper's room.

"May I never—but I thought it was a dream when I heard your voice outside," said old Catty, as she welcomed her young mistress with heartfelt delight; "but when I saw them runnin' here and runnin' there, I said, sure enough, she's come in earnest."

"Quite true, Catty," said Mary, laughing. "I surprised the garrison, and found them, I must say, in most sorry discipline; but never mind, they'll have everything to rights by Wednesday, when we are all coming back again."

"Was the bathing any use to my Lady, Miss?" asked Catty, but in a tone that combined a kind of half drollery with earnest.

"She's better and worse, Catty; better in health, and scarcely as good-humoured; but, there's a good old soul, let me have breakfast, for I have a great deal to do before I ride back."

"But sure you are not goin' to ride back to Kilkieran to-day?"

"That am I, Catty, and up to Kyle's Wood and the new plantations before I go. Why, it's only fifteen miles, old lady!"

"Faix, you're your father's daughter all over," said Catty, with a look first at *her* and then at a water-coloured sketch which occupied a place over the chimney, and represented a fair-haired, handsome boy of about ten years of age.

"Was that ever like Papa?" asked the girl.

"'Tis his born image, it is," said Catty; and her eyes swam with tears as she turned away.

"Well, to *my* thinking he is far better-looking in that picture!" said Mary, pointing with her whip to a coloured drawing of a showily-dressed dragoon officer, reining in his charger, and seeming to eye with considerable disdain the open mouth of a cannon in front of him.

"Ah, then, the other was more himself!" sighed Catty; "and more nat'ral too, with the long hair on his neck and that roguish laugh in his eye."

"And neither are very like that!" said Mary, pointing to a third portrait, which represented a swarthy horseman with a wide sombrero and a jacket all braided and buttoned in Mexican fashion, a rifle at his back and a long lance in his hand, with the heavy coil of a lasso at his saddle-peak.

"Arrah, that ain't a bit like him," said the old woman, querulously, "for all that he said that it was."

Mary arose at the words, and perused aloud some lines which were written at the foot of the picture, and which many and many a time before she had conned over and repeated. They ran thus: "Aye, Catty, though you won't believe it, that rough-looking old rider, all bearded and sunburnt, is your own wild Barry of former days, and for all that the world has done, wonderfully little altered in the core, though the crust is not very like that cherry-cheeked boy that used to, and mayhap, still may, hang over your fireplace.—Guastalla, May, 1808."

"And has he not written since that?" sighed the girl, over whom the dark shadow of orphanhood passed as she spoke.

"Twice only—the first of the two spoke of his coming home again—but somehow he seemed to be put off it, and the next letter was all about you, as if he didn't mean to come back! My Lady and Master Barry never was fond of each other," muttered the old woman, after a pause, and as though giving an explanation to some problem that she was working within her own head.

"But my uncle loved him," broke in Mary.

"And why wouldn't he. Warn't they twins? There was only a few minutes between them—long enough to make one a rich man and leave the other only his own wits and the wide world for a fortune! Ayeh, ayeh!" grumbled out the old crone, "if they were both born poor they'd be livin' together like brothers now, under the one roof—happy and comfortable; and you and your cousin, Master Dick, would be playfellows and companions, instead of his being away in Ingia, or America, or wherever it is!"

The young girl leaned her head on her hand, and appeared to have fallen into a deep train of thought, for she never noticed old Catty's remarks, nor indeed seemed conscious of her presence for some time. "Catty," said she at length, and in a voice of unusually calm earnestness, "never talk to me of these things—they only fret me—they set me a thinking of Heaven knows what longings—for a home, that should be more like a real home than this, though God knows my uncle is all that I could wish in kindness and affection; but—but ——" She stopped, and her lip quivered, and her eyes grew heavy-looking; and then, with a kind of struggle against her emotions, she added gaily, "Come and show me the dairy, Catty. I want to see all those fine things in Wedgewood-ware that you got while we were away, and then we'll have a peep at the calves, and by that time it will be the hour for my levee."

"Faix, Miss," said the old woman, "they're all here already. The news soon spread that you came over this morning, and you'll have a great assembly."

"I'll not keep them waiting, then," said Mary; and, so saying, she left the room, and proceeding by many passages and corridors, at length reached a remote part of the building, which once had formed part of the ancient edifice. A suite of low-ceiled rooms here opened upon a small grassy enclosure, all of which had been appropriated by Mary to her own use. One was a little library or study, neatly but very modestly furnished; adjoining it was her office, where she transacted all business matters; and beyond that again was a large chamber, whose sole furniture consisted in a row of deal presses against the walls, and a long table or counter which occupied the middle of the room. Two large windows opening to the floor lighted the apartment, and no sooner had Mary thrown these wide, than a burst of salutations and greetings arose from a dense and motley crowd assembled on the grass outside, and who stood, sat, or lay in every possible attitude and grouping, their faces all turned towards the window where she was standing.

With true native volubility they poured out not only their welcomings, but a number of interjectional flatteries, supposed not to be audible by her on whom they commented; and thus her hair, her eyes, her teeth, her complexion, even her foot, were praised with an enthusiasm of admiration that might have shamed more polished worshippers.

These muttered eulogies continued as the young girl was occupied unlocking drawers and presses, and placing upon the table several books and papers, as well as a small scale and weights—preparations all equally the source of fruitful observation.

The company was entirely of the softer sex!—an epithet not perhaps in the strictest accordance with an array of faces that really might have shamed witchcraft. Bronzed, blear-eyed, and weather-beaten, seamed with age and scarred with sickness, shrewd-looking, suspicious, and crafty in every lineament, there was yet one characteristic predominant over all—an intense and abject submission, an almost slavish deference to every observation addressed to them. Their dress bespoke the very greatest poverty; not only were they clothed in rags of every hue and shape, but all were barefooted, and some of the very oldest wore no other covering to their heads than their own blanched and grizzled locks.

Nor would a follower of Lavater have argued too favourably of the prosperity of Irish regeneration, in beholding that array of faces—low-browed, treacherous-looking, and almost savagely cruel, as many of them were in expression. There was not, indeed, as often is to be remarked amongst the peasant class of many countries, a look of stupid, stolid indifference; on the contrary, their faces were intensely, powerfully significant, and there was stamped upon them that strange mixture of malignant drollery and sycophancy that no amount of either good or adverse fortune ever entirely subdues in their complex natures.

The expediency of misery had begotten the expediency of morals, and in all the turnings and windings of their shifty natures you could see the suggestions of that abject destitution which had eaten into their very hearts. It would have puzzled a moralist to analyse these "gnarled natures," wherein some of the best and some of the worst features of humanity warred and struggled together. Who could dare to call them kind-hearted or malevolent, grateful or ungrateful, free-giving or covetous, faithful or capricious, as a people? Why, they were all these, and fifty other things just as opposite besides, every twenty-four hours of their lives! Their moods of mind ranged from one extreme to the other; nothing had any permanency amongst them but their wretchedness. Of all their qualities, however, that which most obstructed their improvement, ate deepest into their natures, and suggested the worst fears for the future, was suspicion. They trusted nothing—none—so that every benefit bestowed on them came alloyed with its own share of doubt; and all the ingenuity of their crafty minds found congenial occupation in ascribing this or that motive to every attempt to better their condition.

Mary Martin knew them—understood them—as well as most people; few, indeed, out of their own actual station of life, had seen so much of their domesticity. From her very childhood she had been conversant with their habits and their ways. She had seen them patient under the most trying afflictions, manfully braving every ill of life, and submitting with a noble self-devotion to inevitable calamity; and she had also beheld them, with ignorant impatience, resenting the slightest interference when they deemed it uncalled for, and rejecting kindness when it came coupled with the suggestion of a duty.

By considerable skill, and no little patience, she had insinuated a certain small amount of discipline into this disorderly mass. She could not succeed in persuading them to approach her one by one, or wait with any semblance of order while she was yet occupied; but she enforced conformity with at least one rule, which was, that none should speak save in answer to some question put by herself. This may seem a very small matter, and yet to any one who knows the Irish peasant it will appear little short of miraculous. The passion for discursiveness, the tendency to make an effective theme of their misery, whatever particular shape it may assume, is essentially national, and to curb this vent to native eloquence was to oppose at once the strongest impulse of their natures.

Nothing short of actual, tangible benefits could compensate them for what they scrupled not to think was downright cruelty; nor was it till after months of steady perseverance on her part that her system could be said to have attained any success. Many of the most wretched declined to seek relief on the conditions thus imposed. Some went as actual rebels, to show their friends and neighbours how they would resist such intolerance; others, again, professed that they only went out of curiosity. Strange and incomprehensible people, who can brave every ill of poverty, endure famine, and fever, and want, and yet will not bow the head to a mere matter of form, nor subject themselves to the very least restriction when a passion or a caprice stands opposed to it!

After about eighteen months of hard persistance the system began at length to work; the refractory spirits had either refrained from coming or had abandoned the opposition, and now a semblance of order pervaded the motley assemblage. Whenever the slightest deviation from the ritual occurred, a smart tap of a small ivory ruler on the table imposed silence; and they who disregarded the warning were ordered to move by, unattended to. Had a stranger been permitted, therefore, to take a peep at these proceedings, he would have been astonished at the rapidity with which complaints were heard, and wants redressed; for, with an instinct thoroughly native, Mary Martin appreciated the cases which came before her, and rarely or never confounded the appeal of real suffering with the demands of fictitious sorrow. Most of those who came were desirous of tickets for Dispensary aid, for sickness has its permanent home in the Irish cabin, and fever lurks amidst the damp straw and the smoky atmosphere of the poor peasant's home. Some, however, came for articles of clothing, or for aid to make and repair them; others, for some little assistance in diet, barley for a sick man's drink, a lemon, or an orange, to moisten the parched lips of fever; others, again, wanted leave to send a grandchild or a niece to the school; and, lastly, a few priviledged individuals appeared to claim their weekly rations of snuff or tobacco—little luxuries accorded to old age—comforts that solaced many a dreary hour of a joyless existence. Amongst all the crowded mass, there was not one whom Mary had not known and visited in their humble homes. Thoroughly conversant with their condition and their necessities, she knew well their real wants; and if one less hopeful than herself might have despaired to render any actual relief to such wide-spread misery, she was sanguine enough to be encouraged by the results before her, small and few as they were, to think that possibly the good time was yet to come when such efforts would be unneeded, and when Ireland's industry, employed and rewarded, would more than suffice for all the requirements of her humble poor.

"Jane Maloney," said Mary, placing a small packet on the table. "Give this to Sally Kieran as you pass her door; and here's the order for your own cloak."

"May the heavens be your bed. May the holy ——"

"Catty Honan," cried Mary, with a gesture to enforce silence. "Catty, your granddaughter never comes to the school now that she has got leave. What's the reason of that?"

"Faix, your reverance Miss, 'tis ashamed she is by rayson of her clothes. She says Luke Cassidy's daughters have check aprons."

"No more of this, Catty. Tell Eliza to come on Monday, and if I'm satisfied with her, she shall have one too."

"Two ounces of tea for the Widow Jones."

"Ayeh," muttered an old hag. "But it's weak it makes it without a little green in it!"

"How are the pains, Sarah?" asked Mary, turning to a very feeble-looking old creature with crutches.

"Worse and worse, my Lady. With every change of the weather, they come on afresh."

"The doctor will attend you, Sally, and if he thinks wine good for you, you shall have it."

"'Tis that same would be the savin' of me, Miss Mary," said a cunning-eyed little woman, with a tattered straw bonnet on her head, and a ragged shawl over her.

"I don't think so, Nancy. Come up to the house on Monday morning, and help Mrs. Taafe with the bleaching."

"So this is the duplicate, Polly?" said she, taking a scrap of paper from an old woman, whose countenance indicated a blending of dissipation with actual want.

"One-and-fourpence was all I got on it, and trouble enough it gave me." These words she uttered with a heavy sigh, and in a tone at once resentful and complaining.

"Were my uncle to know that you had pawned your cloak, Polly, he'd never permit you to cross his threshold."

"Ayeh, it's a great sin, to be sure," whined out the hag, half insolently.

"A great shame and a great disgrace it certainly is; and I shall stop all relief to you till the money be paid back."

"And why not!"—"To be sure!"—"Miss Mary is right?"—"What else could she do?" broke in full twenty sycophant voices, who hoped to prefer their own claims by the cheap expedient of condemning another.

"The Widow Hannigan."

"Here, Miss," simpered out a smiling, little old creature, with a curtsey, as she held up a scroll of paper in her hand.

"What's this, Widow Hannigan?"

"'Tis a picture Mickey made of you, Miss, when you was out riding that day with the hounds; he saw you jumping a stone wall."

Mary smiled at the performance, which certainly did not promise future excellence, and went on:

"Tell Mickey to mend his writing; his was the worst copy in the class; and here's a card for your daughter's admission into the Infirmary By-the-way, widow, which of the boys was it I saw dragging the river on Wednesday?"

"Faix, Miss, I don't know. Sure it was none of ours would dare to ——"

"Yes they would, any one of them; but I'll not permit it; and what's more, widow, if it occur again, I'll withdraw the leave I gave to fish with a rod."

"Teresa Johnson, your niece is a very good child, and promises to be very handy with her needle. Let her hem these handkerchiefs, and there's a frock for herself. My uncle says Tom shall have half his wages paid him till he's able to come to work again."

But why attempt to follow out what would be but the long-unending catalogue of native misery—that dreary series of wants and privations to which extreme destitution subjects a long-neglected and helpless people? There was nothing from the cradle to the coffin, from the first wailing wants of infancy to the last requirement of doting old age, that they did not stand in need of.

A melancholy spectacle, indeed, was it to behold an entire population so steeped in misery, so utterly inured to wretchedness, that they felt no shame at its exposure, but rather a sort of self-exultation at any opportunity of displaying a more than ordinary amount of human suffering and sorrow;—to hear them how they caressed their afflictions, how they seemed to fondle their misfortunes, vieing with each other in calamity, and bidding higher and higher for a little human sympathy.

Mary Martin set herself stoutly to combat this practice, including, as it does, one of the most hopeless features of the national character. To inculcate habits of self-reliance she was often driven, in violation of her own feelings, to favour those who least needed assistance, but whose efforts to improve their condition might serve as an example. With a people who are such consummate actors she was driven into simulation herself, and paraded sentiments of displeasure and condemnation when her very heart was bursting with pity and compassion. No wonder was it, then, that she rejoiced when this painful task was completed, and she found herself in the more congenial duty of looking over the "young stock," and listening to old Barny's predictions about yearlings and two-year olds.

This young girl, taught to read by a lady's maid, and to sew by a housekeeper, possessed scarcely any of the resources so usual to those in her own condition, and was of sheer necessity thrown upon herself for occupation and employment. Her intense sympathy with the people, her fondness for them even in their prejudices, had suggested the whole story of her life. Her uncle took little or no interest in the details of his property. The indolence in which he first indulged from liking, became at last a part of his very nature, and he was only too well pleased to see the duty undertaken by another which had no attraction for himself.

"Miss Mary will look to it"—"Tell my niece of it"—"Miss Martin will give her orders," were the invariable replies by which he escaped all trouble, and suffered the whole weight of labour and responsibility to devolve upon a young girl scarcely out of her teens, until gradually, from the casual care of a flower-garden, or a childish pleasure in giving directions, she had succeeded to the almost unlimited rule of her uncle's house and his great estate.

Mr. Martin was often alarmed at some of his niece's measures of reform. The large sums drawn out of bank, the great expenses incurred in weekly wages, the vast plans of building, draining, road-making, and even bridging, terrified him; while the steward, Mr. Henderson, slily insinuated, that though Miss Mary was a wonderful manager, and the "best head he ever knew, except my lady's," she was dreadfully imposed on by the people—but, to be sure, "how could a young lady be up to them?" But she was up to them, aye, and more still, she was up to Mr. Henderson himself, notwithstanding his mild, douce manner, his cautious reserve, and his unbroken self-possession.

It is very far from my intention to say that Mary Martin was not over and over again the dupe of some artifice or other of the crafty and subtle natures that surrounded her. Mock misery, mock industry, mock enlightenment, mock conviction, even mock submission and resignation, had all their partial successes; and she was entrapped by many a pretence that would have had no chance of imposing on Mr. Henderson. Still, there was a credit side to this account, wherein his name would not have figured. There were traits of the people, which he neither could have understood or valued. There were instincts—hard struggling efforts, fighting their way through all the adverse circumstances of their poverty—that he never could have estimated, much less could he have speculated on the future to which they might one day attain.

If Mary was heart and soul devoted to her object—if she thought of nothing else—if all her dreams by night and all her daily efforts were in the cause, she was by no means insensible to the flattery which constantly beset her. She accepted it readily and freely, laughing at what she persuaded herself to believe was the mere exuberance of that national taste for praise. Like most warm and impulsive natures, she was greedy of approbation; even failure itself was consoled by a word of encomium on the effort. She liked to be thought active, clever, and energetic. She loved to hear the muttered voices which at any moment of difficulty said, "Faix, Miss Mary will find the way to it;" or, "Sure it won't baffle *her*, anyhow." This confidence in her powers stimulated and encouraged her, often engendering the very resources it imputed.

She might have made many a mistake in the characters of those for whom she was interested—conceived many a false hope—nurtured many a delusive expectation; but in the scheme of life she had planned out for herself, the exalting sense of a duty more than recompensed her for every failure: and if any existence could be called happy, it was hers—the glorious excitement of an open-air life, with all its movements and animation. There was that amount of adventure and enterprise which gave a character of romantic interest to her undertakings, and thus elevated her to a degree of heroism to herself, and then, knowing no fatigue, she was again in the saddle, and, straight as the crow flies, over the county to Kyle's wood.

A solitary cabin or two stood in the midst of the wild, bleak plain, and by these she paused for a few minutes. The watchful eyes that followed her as she went, and the muttered blessings that were wafted after her, proclaimed what her mission had been, and showed how she had for a brief space thrown a gleam of sunshine over the darksome gloom of some sad existence.

"God bless her! she's always cheerful and light-hearted," said the poor peasant, as he leaned on his spade to look after her; "and one feels better the whole day after the sight of her!"

CHAPTER II.

KILKIERAN BAY.

In one of the many indentures of Kilkieran Bay—favoured by a southerly aspect and a fine sandy beach, sheltered by two projecting headlands—stood a little row of cabins, originally the dwellings of poor fishermen, but now, in summer-time, the resort of the neighbouring gentry, who frequented the coast for sea-bathing. There was little attempt made by the humble owners to accommodate the habits of the wealthy visitors. Some slight effort at neatness, or some modest endeavour at internal decoration, by a little window-curtain or a rickety chest of drawers, were the very extent of these pretensions. Year by year the progress of civilisation went thus lazily forward; and, far from finding fault with this backwardness, it was said that the visitors were just as well satisfied. Many hoped to see the place as they remembered it in their own childhood—many were not sorry to avail themselves of its inexpensive life and simple habits—and some were more pleased that its humble attractions could draw no strangers to sojourn there to mock by their more costly requirements the quiet ways of the old residents.

Under the shelter of a massive rock, which formed the northern boundary of the little bay, stood one building of more pretension. It was a handsome bathing-lodge, with a long verandah towards the sea, and an effort, not very successful, however, at a little flower-garden in front. The spacious bay-windows, which opened in French fashion, were of plate-glass; the deep projecting eave was ornamented with a handsome cornice; and the entire front had been richly decorated by entablatures in stucco and common cement. Still, somehow, there seemed to be a spiteful resistance in the climate to such efforts at embellishment. The wild hurricanes that swept over the broad Atlantic were not to be withstood by the frail timbers of the Gothic verandah. The sweeping gusts that sent foaming spray high over the rocky cliffs, shattered the costly panes, and smashed even the mullions that held them; while fragments of carving, or pieces of stuccoed tracery, together with broken vases and uprooted shrubs, littered the garden and the terrace. The house was but a few years built, and yet was already dilapidated and ruinous-looking. A stout stone wall had replaced the trellised woodwork of one side of the porch; some of the windows were firmly barricaded with boards on the outside; and iron cramps, and other appliances equally unsightly on the roof, showed by what means the slates were enabled to resist the storms.

The aspect of consistent poverty never inspires ridicule. It is shabby gentility alone that provokes the smile of sarcastic meaning; and thus the simple dwellings of the fishermen, in all their humility, offered nothing to the eye of critical remark. There seemed abundant absurdity in this attempt to defy climate and aspect, place and circumstance; and every effort to repair an accident but brought out the pretension into more glaring contrast.

The "Osprey's Nest," as Lady Dorothea Martin had styled her bathing-lodge, bore indeed but a sorry resemblance to its water-coloured emblem in the plan of the architect; for Mr. Kirk had not only improvised a beautiful villa, with fuchsias and clematis, and moss-roses clustering on it, but he had invented an Italian sky, and given a Lago Maggiore tint to the very Atlantic. Your fashionable architect is indeed a finished romancer, and revels in the license of his art with a most voluptuous abandonment.

It was now, however, late in the autumn: some warnings of the approaching equinox had already been felt, and the leaden sky above, and the dark green, sullen sea beneath, above which a cold north-wester swept gustily, recalled but little of the artistic resemblance.

The short September day was drawing to a close, and it was just that dreary interval between day and dusk, so glorious in fine weather, but so terribly depressing in the cold ungenial season, as all the frequenters of the little bay were hastening homeward for the night. Already a twinkling candle or two showed that some had retired to their humble shealings, to grumble over the discomforts about them, and speculate on a speedy departure. They who visited Kilkieran during the "season" were usually the gentry families of the neighbourhood; but as the summer wore over, their places were occupied by a kind of "half-price company"—shopkeepers and smart residents of Oughterard, who waited for their pleasure till it could be obtained economically. Of this class were now those on the evening I have mentioned, and to a small select party of whom I now desire to introduce my reader.

It was "Mrs. Cronan's Evening"—for the duty of host was taken in rotation—and Mrs. Cronan was one of the leaders of fashion in Oughterard, for she lived on her own private means, at the top of Carraway-street, entertained Father Maher every Sunday at dinner, and took in the *Galway Intelligence*, which, it is but fair to say, was, from inverted letters and press blunders, about as difficult reading as any elderly lady ever confronted.

Mrs. Cronan was eminently genteel—that is to say, she spent her life in unceasing lamentations over the absence of certain comforts "she was always used to;" and passed her days in continual reference to some former state of existence, which, to hear her, seemed almost borrowed bodily out of the *Arabian Nights.* Then there was Captain Bodkin, of the Galway Fencibles—a very fat, asthmatic old gentleman, who came down to the "salt water" every summer for thirty years, fully determined to bathe, but never able to summon courage to go in. He was a kind-hearted, jolly old fellow, who loved strong punch and long whist, and cared very little how the world went on, if these enjoyments were available.

Then there was Miss Busk, a very tall, thin, ghostly personage, with a pinkish nose and a pinched lip, but whose manners were deemed the very type of high breeding, for she curtseyed or bowed at almost minute intervals during an "Evening," and had a variety of personal reminiscences of the Peerage. She was of "an excellent family," Mrs. Cronan always said, and though reduced by circumstances—she was the Swan and Edgar of Oughterard—"was company for the Queen herself."

The fourth hand in the whist-table was usually taken by Mrs. Nelligan, wife of "Pat Nelligan"—the great shopkeeper of Oughterard—and who, though by no means entitled on heraldic grounds to take her place in any such exalted company, was, by the happy accident of fortune, elevated to this proud position. Mrs. Nelligan being unwell, her place was, on the present occasion, supplied by her son, and of him I would fain say a few words, since the reader is destined to bear company with him when the other personages here referred to have been long forgotten.

Joseph Nelligan was a tall, pale young fellow, who, though only just passed twenty-two, looked several years older; the serious, thoughtful expression of his face giving the semblance of age. His head was large and massively shaped, and the temples were strong and square, deeply indented at the sides, and throwing the broad, high forehead into greater prominence; dark eyes, shaded by heavy, black eyebrows, lent an almost scowling character to a face which, regular in feature, was singularly calm and impassive-looking. His voice was deep, low, and sonorous, and though strongly impressed with the intonation of his native province, was peculiarly soft, and, to Irish ears, even musical. He was, however, remarkably silent; rarely or never conversed, as his acquaintances understood conversation, and only when roused by some theme that he cared for, or stimulated by some assertion that he dissented from, was he heard to burst forth into a rapid flow of words—uttered as though under the impulse of passion, and of which, when ended, he seemed actually to feel ashamed himself.

He was no favourite with the society of Kilkieran; some thought him downright stupid; others regarded him as a kind of spy upon his neighbours—an imputation most lavishly thrown out in every circle where there is nothing to detect, and where all the absurdity lies palpable on the surface; and many were heard to remark, that he seemed to forget who he was, and that "though he was a College student, he ought to remember he was only Pat Nelligan's son."

If he never courted their companionship, he as little resented their estrangement from him. He spent his days and no small share of his nights in study; books supplied to him the place of men, and in their converse he forgot the world. His father's vanity had entered him as a Fellow-Commoner in the University, and even this served to widen the interval between him and those of his own age—his class-fellows regarded his presence amongst them as an intolerable piece of low-bred presumption. Nor was this unkindly feeling diminished when they saw him, term after term, carry away the prizes of each examination; for equally in science as in classics was he distinguished, till at length it became a current excuse for failure when a man said, "I was in Nelligan's division."

It is not impossible that his social isolation contributed much to his success. For him there were none of the amusements which occupy those of his own age. The very fact of his Fellow-Commoner's gown separated him as widely from one set of his fellow-students as from the other, and thus was he left alone with his ambition. As time wore on, and his successes obtained wider notoriety, some of those in authority in the University appeared to be disposed to make advances to him; but he retreated modestly from these marks of notice, shrouding himself in his obscurity, and pleading the necessity for study. At length came the crowning act of his College career, in the examination for the gold medal, and although no competitor was bold enough to dispute the prize with him, he was obliged to submit to the ordeal. It is rarely that the public vouchsafes any interest in the details of University honours; but this case proved an exception, and almost every journal of the capital alluded in terms of high panegyric to the splendid display he made on that occasion.

In the very midst of these triumphs, young Nelligan arrived at his father's house in Oughterard, to enjoy the gratification his success had diffused at home, and rest himself after his severe labours. Little as old Pat Nelligan or his neighbours knew of University honours, or the toil which won them, there was enough in the very publicity of his son's career to make him a proud man. He at least knew that Joe had beaten them all; that none could hold a candle to him; "that for nigh a century such answering had not been heard on the bench." This was the expression of a Dublin journal, coupled with the partisan regret that, by the bigoted statutes of the College, genius of such order should be denied the privilege of obtaining a fellowship.

If young Nelligan retired, half in pride, half in bashfulness, from the notice of society in Dublin, he was assuredly little disposed to enter into the gaieties and dissipations of a small country town existence. The fulsome adulation of some, the stupid astonishment of others, but, worse than either, the vulgar assumption that his success was a kind of party triumph —a blow dealt by the plebeian against the patrician—the Papist against the Protestant—shocked and disgusted him, and he was glad to leave Oughterard and accompany his mother to the sea-side. She was an invalid of some years' standing—a poor, frail, simple-hearted creature, who, after a long, struggling life of hardship and toil, saw herself in affluence and comfort, and yet could not bring her mind to believe it true. As little could she comprehend the strange fact of Joe's celebrity—of his name figuring in newspapers, and his health being drunk at a public dinner in his native town. To her he was invaluable; the very tenderest of nurses, and the best of all companions. She didn't care for books, even those of the most amusing kind, but she loved to hear the little gossip of the place where the neighbours passed the evening; what topics they discussed; who had left and who had arrived, and every other little incident of their uneventful lives. Simple and easy of execution as such an office might have been to a kindred spirit, to Joseph Nelligan it proved no common labour. And certain it is that the mistakes he committed in names, and the blunders he fell into as regarded events, rather astonished his mother, and led that good lady to believe that Trinity College must not have been fertile in genius when poor Joe was regarded as one of the great luminaries of his time. "Ah," would she say, "if he had his father's head, it would be telling him! but, poor boy, he remembers nothing!"

This digression—far longer than I cared to make it—but which has grown to its present extent under my hands, will explain young Nelligan's presence at Mrs. Cronan's "Tea," where already a number of other notables had now assembled, and were gracefully dispersed through the small rooms which formed her apartment. Play of various kinds formed the chief amusement of the company; and while the whist-table, in decorous gravity, held the chief place in the sitting-room, a laughing round game occupied the kitchen, and a hardly-contested "hit" of backgammon was being fought out on the bed, where, for lack of furniture, the combatants had established themselves.

The success of an evening party is not always proportionate to the means employed to secure it. Very splendid *salons*, costly furniture, and what newspapers call "all the delicacies of the season," are occasionally to be found in conjunction with very dull company; while a great deal of enjoyment, and much social pleasure, are often to be met with where the material resources have been of the fewest and most simple kind. On the present occasion there was a great deal of laughing, and a fair share of love-making: some scolding at whist, and an abundance of scandal, at least of that cut-and-thrust at character which amuses the speakers themselves, and is never supposed to damage those who are the object of it. All the company who had frequented the port—as Kilkieran was called—during the season, were passed in review, and a number of racy anecdotes interchanged about their rank, morals, fortune, and pretensions. A very general impression seemed to prevail, that in the several points of climate, scenery, social advantages, and amusements, Kilkieran might stand a favourable comparison with the first watering-places, not alone of England, but the Continent; and after various discursive reasons why its fame had not equalled its deserts, there was an almost unanimous declaration of opinion that the whole fault lay with the Martins; not, indeed, that the speakers were very logical in their arguments, since some were heard to deplore the change from the good old times, when everybody was satisfied to live anywhere, and anyhow; when there was no road to the place but a bridle-path; not a loaf of bread to be had within twelve miles; no post-office; while others eloquently expatiated on all that might have been, and yet was not done.

"We tried to get up a little news-room," said Captain Bodkin, "and I went to Martin myself about it, but he hum'd and ha'd, and said, until people subscribed for the Dispensary, he thought they needn't mind newspapers."

"Just like him," said Mrs. Cronan; "but indeed I think it's my Lady does it all."

"I differ from you, ma'am," said Miss Busk, with a bland smile; "I attribute the inauspicious influence to another."

"You mean Miss Martin?" said Mrs. Cronan.

"Just so, ma'am; indeed, I have reason to know I am correct. This time two years it was I went over to Cro' Martin House to propose opening 'my Emporium' for the season at the port. I thought it was due to the owners of the estate, and due to myself also," added Miss Busk, majestically, "to state my views about a measure so intimately associated with the ——, the——, in fact, what I may call the interests of civilisation. I had just received my plates of the last fashions from Dublin—you may remember them, ma'am, I showed them to you at Mrs. Cullenane's—well, when I was in the very middle of my explanation, who should come into the room but Miss Martin ——"

"Dressed in the old brown riding-habit?" interposed a fat old lady, with one eye.

"Yes, Mrs. Few, in the old brown riding-habit. She came up to the table, with a saucy laugh in her face, and said, 'Why uncle, are you going to give a fancy ball!'

"'It is the last arrival from Paris, Miss,' said I, 'the Orleans mantle, which, though not a "costume de Chasse," is accounted very becoming.'

"'Ah, you're laughing at my old habit, Miss Busk,' said she, seeing how I eyed her; 'and it really is very shabby, but I intend to give Dan Leary a commission to replace it one of these days.'"

"Dan Leary, of the Cross-roads!" exclaimed Captain Bodkin, laughing.

"I pledge you my word of honour, sir, she said it. 'And as to all this finery, Miss Busk,' said she, turning over the plates with her whip, 'it would be quite unsuitable to our country, our climate, and our habits; not to say, that the Orleans mantle would be worn with an ill grace when our people are going half naked!'"

"Positively indecent—downright indelicate!" shuddered Mrs. Cronan.

"And did Martin agree with her?" asked the Captain.

"I should like to know when he dared to do otherwise. Why, between my Lady and the niece he can scarcely call his life his own."

"They say he has a cruel time of it," sighed Mr. Clinch, the revenue-officer, who had some personal experience of domestic slavery.

"Tush—nonsense!" broke in his wife. "I never knew one of those hen-pecked creatures that wasn't a tyrant in his family. I'll engage, if the truth were known, Lady Dorothy has the worst of it."

"Faith, and he's much altered from what he was when a boy, if any one rules him," said the Captain. "I was at school with him and his twin-brother Barry; I remember the time when one of them had to wear a bit of red ribbon in his button-hole, to distinguish him from the other. They were the born images of each other; that is, in looks, for in real character they weren't a bit like. Godfrey was a cautious, quiet, careful chap, that looked after his pocket-money, and never got into scrapes: and Barry was a wasteful devil, that made the coin fly, and could be led by any one. I think he'd have given his life for his brother any day. I remember once when Godfrey wouldn't fight a boy—I forget what it was about—Barry stole the bit of ribbon out of his coat, and whent up and fought in his place, and a mighty good thrashing he got, too."

"I have heard my father speak of that," said a thin, pale, careworn little man, in green spectacles; "for the two boys were taken away at once, and it was the ruin of the school."

"So it was, Doctor; you're right there," broke in the

Captain; "and they say that Martin bears a grudge against you to this day."

"That would be hard," sighed the [illegible] Doctor, "for I had nothing to do with it, or my father either. But it cost him dearly!" added he, mournfully.

"You know best, Doctor, whether it is true or not; but he certainly wasn't your friend when you tried for the Fever Hospital."

"That was because Pat Nelligan was on my committee," said the Doctor.

"And was that sufficient to lose you Mr. Martin's support, sir?" asked young Nelligan, with a degree of astonishment in his face, that, joined to the innocence of the question, caused a general burst of hearty laughter.

"The young gentleman knows more about *cubic* sections, it appears, than of what goes on in his own town," said the Captain. "Why, sir, your father is the most independent man in all Oughterard; and, if I know Godfrey Martin, he'd give a thousand guineas this night to have him out of it."

A somewhat animated "rally" followed this speech, in which different speakers gave their various reasons why Martin ought, or ought not, to make any sacrifice to put down the spirit of which Pat Nelligan was the chief champion. These arguments were neither cogent nor lucid enough to require repeating; nor did they convey to Joseph himself, with all his anxiety for information, the slightest knowledge on the subject discussed. Attention was, however, drawn off the theme by the clattering sound of a horse passing along the shingly shore at a smart gallop, and with eager curiosity two or three rushed to the door to see what it meant. A swooping gust of wind and rain, overturning chairs and extinguishing candles, drove them suddenly back again; and, half laughing at the confusion, half cursing the weather, the party barricaded the door, and returned to their places.

"Of course it was Miss Martin; who else would be out at this time of the night?" said Mrs. Clinch.

"And without a servant!" exclaimed Miss Busk.

"Indeed, you may well make the remark, ma'am," said Mrs. Cronan. "The young lady was brought up in a fashion that wasn't practised in my time!"

"Where could she have been down that end of the port, I wonder?" said Mrs. Clinch. "She came up from Garra Cliff."

"Maybe she came round by the strand," said the Doctor; "if she did, I don't think there's one here would like to have followed her."

"I wouldn't be her horse!" said one—"Nor her groom!" muttered another; and thus, gradually lashing themselves into a wild indignation, they opened at last a steady fire upon the young lady—her habits, her manners, and her appearance, all coming in for a share of criticism; and, although a few modest amendments were put in favour of her horsemanship and her good looks, the motion was carried that no young lady ever took such liberties before, and that the meeting desired to record their strongest censure on the example thus extended to their own young people.

If young Nelligan ventured upon a timid question of what it was she had done, he was met by an eloquent chorus of half a dozen voices, recounting mountain excursions which no young lady had ever made before; distant spots visited, dangers incurred, storms encountered, perils braved, totally unbecoming to her in her rank of life, and showing that she had no personal respect, nor, as Miss Busk styled it—"a proper sense of the dignity of woman!"

"'Twas down at Mrs. Nelligan's, ma'am, Miss Mary was," said Mrs. Cronan's maid, who had been despatched special to make inquiry on the subject.

"At my mother's!" exclaimed Joseph, reddening, without knowing in the least why. And now a new diversion occurred, while all discussed every possible and impossible reason for this singular fact, since the family at the "Nest" maintained no intercourse whatever with their neighbours, not even seeming, by any act of their lives, to acknowledge their very existence.

Young Nelligan took the opportunity to make his escape during the debate; and as the society offers nothing very attractive to detain us, it will be as well if we follow him, while he hastened homeward along the dark and storm-lashed beach. He had about a mile to go, and, short as was this distance, it enabled him to think over what he had just heard, strange and odd as it seemed to his ears. Wholly given up, as he had been for years past, to the ambition of a College life, with but one goal before his eyes, one class of topics engrossing his thoughts, he had never even passingly reflected on the condition of parties, the feuds of opposing factions, and, stronger than either, the animosities that separated social ranks in Ireland. Confounding the occasional slights he had experienced by virtue of his class, with the jealousy caused by his successes, he had totally overlooked the disparagement men exhibited towards the son of the little country shopkeeper, and never knew of his disqualification for a society whose precincts he had not tried to pass. The littleness, the unpurpose-like vacuity, the intense vulgarity of his Oughterard friends, had disgusted him, it is true, but he had yet to learn that the foolish jealousy of their wealthy neighbour was a trait still less amiable, and ruminating over these problems—knottier far to him than many a complex formula, or many a disputed reading of a Greek play—he at last reached the solitary little cabin where his mother lived.

It is astonishing how difficult men of highly cultivated and actively practised minds, find it to comprehend the little turnings and windings of commonplace life, the jealousies and the rivalries of small people. They search for motives where there are merely impulses, and look for reasons when there are simple passions.

It was only as he lifted the latch that he remembered how deficient he was in all the information his mother would expect from him. Of the fortunes of the whist-table he actually knew nothing, and had he been interrogated as to the "toilette" of the party, his answers would have betrayed a lamentable degree of ignorance. Fortunately for him, his mother did not display her habitual anxiety on these interesting themes. She neither asked after the Captain's winnings—he was the terror of the party—nor whether Miss Busk astonished the company by another new gown. Poor Mrs. Nelligan was too brimful of another subject to admit of one particle of extraneous matter to occupy her. With a proud consciousness, however, of her own resources, she affected to have thoughts for other things, and asked Joe if he passed a pleasant day?

"Yes, very—middling—quite so—rather stupid, I thought," replied he, in his usual half-connected manner, when unable to attach his mind to the question before him.

"Of course, my dear, it's very unlike what you're used to up in Dublin, though I believe that Captain Bodkin, when he goes there, always dines with the Lord-Lieutenant; and Miss Busk, I know, is second cousin to Ram of Swainestown, and there is nothing better than that in Ireland. I say this between ourselves, for your father can't bear me to talk of family or connexions—though I am sure I was always brought up to think a great deal about good blood, and if my father was a Finnerty, my mother was a Moore of Crockbawn, and her family never looked at her for marrying my father."

"Indeed!" said Joe, in a dreamy semi-consciousness.

"It's true what I'm telling you. She often said it to me herself, and told me what a blessing it was, through all her troubles and trials in life—and she had her share of them, for my father was often in drink, and very cruel at times—'it supports me,' she used to say, 'to remember who I am, and the stock I came from, and to know that there's not one belonging to me would speak to me, nor look at the same side of the road with me, after what I done; and Matty,' said she to me, 'if ever it happens to you to marry a man beneath you in life, always bear in mind that, no matter how he treats you, you're better than him.' And, indeed, it's a great support and comfort to one's feelings after all," said she with a deep sigh.

"I'm certain of it," muttered Joe, who had not followed one word of the harangue.

"But mind that you never tell your father so. Indeed, I wouldn't let on to him what happened this evening."

"What was that?" asked the young man, roused by the increased anxiety of her manner.

"It was a visit I had, my dear," replied the old lady, with a simpering consciousness that she had something to reveal—"it was a visit I had paid me, and by an elegant young lady, too."

"A young lady? Not Miss Cassidy, mother. I think she left yesterday morning."

"No, indeed, my dear. Somebody very different from Miss Cassidy; and you might guess till you were tired before you'd think of Miss Martin."

"Miss Martin!" echoed Joe.

"Exactly so. Miss Martin of Cro' Martin; and the way it happened was this. I was sitting here alone in the room after my tea—for I sent Biddy out to borrow the *Intelligence* for me—and then comes a sharp knock to the door, and I called out, 'Come in,' but instead of doing so there was another rapping, louder than before, and I said, 'Bother you, can't you lift the latch;' and then I heard a something like a laugh, and so I went out, and you may guess the shame I felt as I saw a young lady fastening the bridle of her horse to the bar of the window. 'Mrs. Nelligan, I believe,' said she, with a smile and a look that warmed my heart to her at once; and as I curtseyed very low, she went on. I forget, indeed, the words, whether she said she was Miss Martin, or it was I that asked the question; but I know she came in with me to the room, and sat down where you are sitting now. 'Coming back from Kyle's Wood this morning,' said she, 'I overtook poor Billy with the post;

he was obliged to go two miles out of his way to ford the river; and what with waiting for the mail, which was late in coming, and what with being wet through, he was completely knocked up; so I offered to take the bag for him, and send it over to-morrow by one of our people. But the poor fellow wouldn't consent, because he was charged with something of consequence for you—a small bottle of medicine. Of course I was only too happy to take this also, Mrs. Nelligan, and here it is.' And with that she put it on the table, where you see it. I'm sure I never knew how to thank her enough for her good nature, but I said all that I could think of, and told her that my son was just come back from College, after getting the gold medal."

"You didn't speak of that, mother," said he, blushing till his very forehead was crimson.

"Indeed, then, I did, Joe; and I'd like to know why I wouldn't. Is it a shame or a disgrace to us! At any rate, *she* didn't think so, for she said, 'You must be very proud of him;' and I told her so I was, and that he was as good as he was clever; and, moreover, that the newspapers said the time was coming when men like young Nelligan would soar their way up to honours and distinctions in spite of the oppressive aristocracy that so long had combined to degrade them."

"Good Heavens! mother, you couldn't have made such a speech as that?" cried he, in a voice of downright misery.

"Didn't I, then? And didn't she say, if there were any such oppression as could throw obstacles in the way of deserving merit, she heartily hoped it might prove powerless; and then she got up to wish me good evening. I thought, at first, a little stiffly, that is, more haughty in her manner than at first; but when I arose to see her out, and she saw I was lame, she pressed me down into my chair, and said in such a kind voice, 'You mustn't stir, my dear Mrs. Nelligan. I, who can find my road over half of the county, can surely discover my way to the door.' 'Am I ever like to have the happiness of seeing you again, Miss?' said I, as I held her hand in mine. 'Certainly, if it would give you the very slightest pleasure,' said she, pressing my hand most cordially; and with that we parted. Indeed, I scarce knew she was gone when I heard the clattering of the horse over the shingle, for she was away in a gallop, dark as the night was. Maybe," added the old lady, with a sigh—"maybe, I'd have thought it was all a dream, if it wasn't that I found that glove of hers on the floor; she dropped it, I suppose, going out."

Young Nelligan took up the glove with a strange feeling of bashful reverence. It was as though he was touching a sacred relic; and he stood gazing on it steadfastly for some seconds.

"I'll send it over to the house by Biddy, with my compliments, and to know how the family is, in the morning," said Mrs. Nelligan, with the air of one who knew the value of conventional usages.

"And she'll make some stupid blunder or other," replied Joe, impatiently, "that will cover us all with shame. No, mother, I'd rather go with it myself than that."

"To be sure, and why not," said Mrs. Nelligan. "There's no reason why *you* should be taking up old quarrels against the Martins; for *my* part, I never knew the country so pleasant as it used to be long ago, when we used to get leave to go picnicking on the grounds of Cro' Martin, up to the Hermitage, as they called it; and now the gates are locked and barred like a gaol, and nobody allowed in without a ticket."

"Yes, I'll go myself with it," said Joe, who heard nothing of his mother's remark, but was following out the track of his own speculations. As little did he attend to the various suggestions she threw out for his guidance and direction, the several topics to which he might, and those to which he must not, on any account, allude.

"Not a word, for your life, Joe, about the right of pathway to Clune Abbey, and take care you say nothing about the mill-race at Glandaff, nor the shooting in Kyle's wood. And if by any chance there should be a talk about the tolls at Oughterard, say you never heard of them before. Make out, in fact," said she, summing up, "as if you never heard of a county where there was so much good-will and kindness between the people; and sure it isn't your fault if it's not true!" And with this philosophic reflection, Mrs. Nelligan wished her son good night and retired.

CHAPTER III.

AN AUTUMN MORNING IN THE WEST.

THE Osprey's Nest was, I have said, like a direct challenge hurled at the face of western gales and Atlantic storms. With what succes, its aspect of dilapidation and decay but too plainly betrayed. The tangled seaweed, that hung in dripping festoons over the porch—the sea-shells that rattled against the window-panes, seemed like an angry denunciation of the attempt to brave the elements by the mere appliances of ease and luxury.

It was better, however, in the inside, where, in a roomy apartment, most comfortably furnished, a lady and gentleman sat at breakfast; the table stood in a little projection of the room, admitting of a wide sea-view over the bay and the distant islands of Lettermullen, but as carefully excluded all prospect of the port—a locality which held no high place in the esteem of the lady of the house, and which, by ignoring, she half fancied she had annihilated. Wild promontories of rocks, jutting out here and there, broke the coast line, and marked the shore with a foaming stream of white water, as the ever-restless sea dashed over them. The long booming swell of the great ocean bounded into many a rocky cavern with a loud report like thunder, and issued forth again with a whole cataract of falling stones, that rattled like the crash of small-arms. It was unceasing deafening clamour in the midst of deathlike desolation.

Let me, however, turn once more to the scene within, and present the living elements to my reader. They were both past the prime of life. The lady might still be called handsome; her features were perfectly regular, and finely cut, bearing the impress of a proud and haughty spirit, that never quailed beneath the conflict of a long life, and even yet showed a firm front to fortune. Her hair was white as snow, and as she wore it drawn back, after the fashion of a bygone time, it gave her the air of a fine lady of the old French Court, in all the pomp of powder and pomatum. Nor did her dress correct the impression, since the deep falls of lace that covered her hands, the lengthy stomacher, and trailing folds of her heavy brocade gown, all showed a lurking fondness for the distinctive toilette of that era. Lady Dorothea Martin had been a beauty and an Earl's daughter; two facts that not even the seclusion of the wild west could erase from her memory.

Mr. Martin himself was no unworthy "pendant" to this portrait. He was tall and stately, with a lofty forehead, and temples finely and well fashioned, while full, deep-set blue eyes, of the very sternest determination, and a mouth every line of which betrayed firmness, gave the character to a face that also could expand into the most genial good fellowship, and become at times the symbol of a pleasant and convivial Irish gentleman. In his youth he had been a beau of the Court of Versailles. Scandal had even coupled his name with that of Marie Antoinette; and more truthful narratives connected him with some of the most extravagant adventures of that profligate and brilliant period. After a career of the wildest dissipation and excess, he had married, late in life, the daughter of the Earl of Exmere, one of the proudest and poorest names in the British Peerage. Two or three attempts to shine in the world of London—not as successful as they were expected to have proved—an effort at ascendancy in Irish political life, also a failure, coupled with disappointment on the score of an only brother, who had married beneath him, and was reputed to have "lost himself," seemed to have disgusted Godfrey Martin with the world, and he had retired to his lonely mansion in the west, which now for eighteen years he had scarcely quitted for a single day.

His only son had joined a cavalry regiment in India a few years before the period our story opens, and which, I may now state, dates for about four or five-and-twenty years back; but his family included a niece, the only child of his brother, and whose mother had died in giving her birth.

Between Mr. Martin and Lady Dorothea, as they sat at breakfast, little conversation passed. He occupied himself with the newly-arrived newspapers, and she perused a mass of letters which had just come by that morning's post; certain scraps of the intelligence gleaned from either of these sources forming the only subjects of conversation between them.

"So, they have resolved to have a new Parliament. I knew it would come to that—I always said so—and, as usual, the dissolution finds us unprepared."

"Plantagenet's regiment is ordered to Currachee, wherever that may be," said Lady Dorothea, languidly.

"Call him Harry, and we shall save ourselves some trouble in discussing him," replied he, pettishly. "At all events, he cannot possibly be here in time for the contest, and we must, I suppose, give our support to Kilmorris again."

"Do you mean, after his conduct about the harbour, and the shameful way he sneaked out of the Port Martin project?"

"Find anything better, Madam, there is the difficulty. Kilmorris is a gentleman, and no Radical; and, as times go, these are rather rare qualities."

"Lady Sarah Upton's match is off," said Lady Dorothea, reading from a note beside her. "Sir Joseph insisted upon the uncontrolled possession of all her Staffordshire property."

"And perfectly right."

"Perfectly wrong to give it to him."

"A fool if he married without it."

"A mean creature she, to accept him on such terms."

"The woman is eight-and-thirty—if not more. I remember her at Tunbridge. Let me see, what year was it?"

"I detest dates, and abhor chronologies. Reach me the marmalade," said Lady Dorothea, superciliously.

"What's this balderdash here from the *Galway Indicator*. 'The haughty and insolent, aye, and ignorant aristocracy will have to swallow a bitter draught ere long; and such petty despots as Martin of Cro' Martin will learn that the day is gone by for their ascendancy in this county.' They tell me we have a law of libel in the land, and yet see how this scoundrel can dare to drag me by name before the world; and I'll wager a thousand pounds I'd fail to get a verdict against him if I prosecuted him to-morrow," said Martin, as he dashed the newspaper to the ground, and stamped his foot upon it. "We are constantly reading diatribes about absentee landlords, and the evils of neglected property—but I ask, what inducements are there held out to any gentleman to reside on his estate, if every petty scribbler of the press can thus attack and assail him with impunity?"

"Is that Mary I see yonder?" asked Lady Dorothea, languidly, as she lifted her double eye-glass, and then suffered it to fall from her fingers.

"So it is, by Jove!" cried Martin, springing up, and approaching the window. "I wish she'd not venture out in that small boat in this treacherous season. What a swell there is, too. The wind is from the sea."

"She's coming in, I fancy," drawled out Lady Dorothea.

"How is she to do it, though?" exclaimed he, hurriedly; "the sea is breaking clear over the piers of the harbour. I can only see one man in the boat—what rashness—what folly! There, look, they're standing out to sea again!" And now, throwing open the window, Martin stepped out on the rocks, over which the white foam flashed by like snow. "What are they at, Peter—what are they trying to do?" cried he to an old fisherman, who, with the coil of a net he was just mending, on his arm, had now come down to the shore to watch the boat.

"They're doing right, your Honour," said he, touching his cap respectfully; "'tis Loony my Lady has in the boat, and there's no better man in trouble! He's just going to beat out a bit, and then he'll run in under the shelter of the blue rocks. Faix, she's a fine boat then for her size—look at her now!"

But Martin had covered his eyes with his hand, while his lips murmured and moved rapidly.

"May I never, but they're letting out the reef!" screamed the old man in terror.

"More sail, and in such a sea!" cried Martin in a voice of horror.

"Aye, and right to," said the fisherman, after a pause,—"she's rising lighter over the sea, and steers better, besides. It's Miss Mary has the tiller," added the old fellow, with a smile. "I'll lay a shilling she's singing this minute."

"You think so," said Martin, glad to catch at this gleam of confidence.

"I know it well, your Honour. I remember one day, off Lettermullen, it was worse than this. Hurrah!" screamed he out suddenly, "she took in a great sea that time!"

"Get out a boat, Peter, at once; what are we standing here for?" cried Martin, angrily; "man a boat this instant."

"Sure no boat could get out to sea with this wind, sir," remonstrated the old man, mildly; "she'd never leave the surf, if ye had forty men at her!"

"Then, what's to be done?"

"Just let them alone, themselves two, know as well what to do as any pair in Ireland, and are as cool besides. There now.

she's putting her about, as I said, and she'll run for the creek." The frail boat, a mere speck upon the dark green ocean, seemed now to fly, as with a slackened sheet she darted over the water. Her course was bent for a little cove, concealed from view by a rugged promontory of rock, up which the old fisherman now clambered with the alacrity of a younger man. Martin tried to follow, but, overcome by emotion, he was unable, and sat down upon a ledge of rock, burying his face within his hands.

By this time the whole fishing population of the little village had gathered on the beach around the cove, to watch the boat as she came in: numbers had gone out to meet her, and stood up to their waists in the white and boiling surf, ready to seize upon the skiff and run her high and dry upon the sand. Even they were obliged to be lashed together by a rope, lest the receding waves should carry them out to sea, or the "under tow" suck them beneath the surface. As the boat came within speaking distance, a wild shout arose from the shore to "down sail" and suffer her to come in on her way alone; but with all the canvas spread, they came flying along, scarce seeming more than to tip the waves as they skipped over them, while a shower of spray appeared to cover them as the sea broke upon the stern. Instead of rendering aid, the utmost the fishermen could do was to clear a path amongst them for the skiff to pass, as with lightning speed she flitted by and drove her bow high up on the hard beach.

A wild glad cheer of joy and welcome burst from the hearty fishermen as they crowded about the young girl, who stepped out of the boat with a heavy bundle in her arms. Her hair hung in great masses over her neck and shoulders, her cheeks were flushed, and her dark eyes gleamed with all the excitement of peril and triumph.

"Here, Margaret," said she to a young woman, who, pale with terror and with face streaming in tears, rushed towards her—"here's your little fellow, all safe and sound; I'd not have put back but for his sake." And with this she placed in his mother's arms a little boy of about three years of age, sound asleep. "He must wait for better weather if he wants to see his grandmother. And," added she, laughing, "I scarcely think you'll catch me going to sea again with so precious a cargo. Poor little man," and she patted his ruddy cheeks, "he behaved so well, like a stout fisherman's son as he is—never showed fear for a moment."

A murmur of delighted hearts ran through the crowd, some thinking of the child, but many more in warm admiration of the brave and beautiful young girl before them. "Loony," said she to her boatman, "when you've got the tackle to rights, come up to the house for your breakfast." And with that, and a few words of grateful recognition as she passed, she clambered up the rock and hastened homeward.

As for her uncle, no sooner had he heard of her safe arrival on shore than he hurried back, anxious to reach the house before her. For a considerable time back Martin had schooled himself into an apparent indifference about his niece's perils. Lady Dorothea had probably given the initiative to this feeling, by constantly asserting that the young lady would incur few risks when they ceased to create alarm.

It was a somewhat ungracious theory, and excited in Martin's mind, when he first heard it, a sensation the very reverse of agreeable. Without accepting its truth, however, it made a deep impression upon him, and at last, by way of policy, he resolved to feign a degree of callous indifference very foreign to his nature, and, by dint of mere habit, he at length acquired a semblance of calm, under circumstances that sorely tested his powers of self-control.

"Has the heroine arrived safe on shore?" asked Lady Dorothea in her own languid drawl. And Martin almost started at the question, and seemed for a moment as if the indignation it excited could not be repressed; then smiling superciliously at the impassive air of her features, he said:

"Yes, and by rare good luck, too! The sea is a terrific one this morning!"

"Is it ever anything else in this heavenly climate?" said she, sighing. "I have counted two fine days since the 8th of June; and indeed it rained a little on one of them."

Martin winced impatiently under the remark, but never lifted his eyes from the newspaper.

"I had hoped your niece was making arrangements for our return to Cro' Martin," said she, querulously, "instead of planning marine excursions. I told her yesterday—or the day before, I forget which; but who could remember time in such a place! —that I was bored to death here. The observation seems to amuse you, Mr. Martin, but it is a simple fact."

"And you are bored to death at Cro' Martin too, if I mistake not?" said he, with a very significant dryness.

"I should think I was, sir, and nothing very astonishing in the confession besides."

"And Dublin, madam?"

"Don't speak of it. If one must endure prison discipline, at least let us have a cell to ourselves. Good morning, Miss Martin. I hope you enjoyed your party on the water?"

This speech was addressed to Mary, who now entered the room dressed in a plain morning costume, and in her quiet, almost demure look, resembling in nothing the dripping and dishevelled figure that sprung from the boat.

"Good morning, aunt," said she, gaily. "Good morning, uncle," kissing, as she spoke, his cheek, and patting him fondly on the shoulder. "I saw you out on the rocks as we were coming in."

"Pooh, pooh," said he, in affected indifference. "I knew there was no danger ——"

"Yes but there was though," said she, quickly. "If we hadn't set all sail on her she'd have been pooped to a certainty; and I can tell you I was in a rare fright too."

"Oh, indeed, you confess to such an ignoble emotion?" said Lady Dorothea, with a sneer.

"That I do, aunt, for I had poor Madge Lennan's little boy on my lap all the time, and if it came to a swim, I don't see how he was to be saved."

"You'd not have left him to his fate, I suppose?" said Lady Dorothea.

"I scarcely know what I should have done. I sincerely hope it would have been my best; but in a moment like that, within sight of home too ——" Her eyes met her uncle's as she said this; he had raised them from his newspaper, and bent them fully on her. There was that in their expression which appealed so strongly to her heart, that instead of finishing her speech she sprung towards him and threw her arms around his neck.

"Quite a scene; and I detest scenes," said Lady Dorothea, as she arose and swept out of the room contemptuously; but they neither heard the remark nor noticed her departure.

CHAPTER IV.

MAURICE SCANLAN, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW.

About an hour after the occurrence mentioned in our last chapter, the quiet little village of Kilkieran was startled by the sharp clattering sounds of horses' feet, as Mr. Scanlan's tandem came slinging along; and after various little dexterities amid stranded boats, disabled anchors, and broken capstans, drew up at the gate of the Osprey's Nest. When men devise their own equipage, they invariably impart to it a strong infusion of their own idiosyncrasy. The quiet souls who drag through life in chocolate-coloured barouches, with horses indifferently matched, give no clue to their special characteristics; but your men of tax-carts, and tandems, your Jehus of four-in-hand teams, write their own biographies in every detail of the "turn-out."

Maurice Scanlan was a sporting attorney, and from the group of game cocks neatly painted on the hind panel, to the wiry, well bred, and well looking screws before him, all was indicative of the man. The conveyance was high, and red-wheeled; the nags were a chesnut and a grey; he drove them without winkers or bearing-reins, wearing his white hat a very little on one side, and gracefully tilting his elbow as he admonished the wheeler with the "crop" of his whip. He was a good-looking, showy, vulgar, self-sufficient kind of fellow, with consummate shrewdness in all business transactions, only marred by one solitary weak point—an intense desire to be received intimately by persons of a station above his own, and to seem, at least, to be the admitted guest of very fashionable society. It was not a very easy matter to know if this Lord-worship of his was real, or merely affected, since certainly the profit he derived from the assumption was very considerable, and Maurice was entrusted with a variety of secret-service transactions, and private affairs for the Nobility, which they would never have dreamed of committing to the hands of their more recognised advisers.

If men would have been slow to engage his services in any grave or important suit, he was invaluable in all the ordinary and constantly-occurring events of this changeful world. He knew every one's difficulties and embarrassments. There was not a hitch in a settlement, nor a spavin in your stables, could escape him. He seemed to possess a kind of intuitive appreciation of a flaw; and he pounced upon a defect with a rapidity that counterfeited genius. To these gifts he added a consummate knowledge of his countrymen. He had emerged from the very humblest class of the people, and he knew them thoroughly; with all their moods of habitual distrust and momentary enthusiasm—with all their phases of sanguine hopefulness he was familiar; and he could mould, and fashion, and wield them to his will, as passive subjects as the heated bar under the hammer of the smith.

As an electioneering agent he was unequalled. It was precisely the sphere in which his varied abilities were best exercised; and it was, besides, an arena in which he was proud of figuring. For a while he seemed—at least in his own eyes—to stand on a higher eminence than the candidate he represented, and to be a more prominent and far grander personage than his principal. In fact, it was only under some tacit acknowledgment of this temporary supremacy that his services were obtainable; his invariable stipulation being, that he was to have the entire and uncontrolled direction of the election.

Envious tongues and ungenerous talkers did, indeed, say that Maurice insisted upon this condition with very different objects in view, and that his unlimited powers found their pleasantest exercise in the inexplorable realms of secret bribery; however, it is but fair to say, that he was eminently successful, and that one failure alone in his whole career occurred to show the proverbial capriciousness of fortune.

With the little borough of Oughterard he had become so identified that his engagement was regarded as one of the first elements of success. Hitherto, indeed, the battle had been always an easy one. The Liberal party—as they pleasantly assumed to style themselves—had gone no further in opposition than an occasional burst of intemperate language, and an effort —usually a failure—at a street row during the election. So little of either energy or organisation had marked their endeavours, that the great leader of the day had stigmatised their town with terms of heavy censure, and even pronounced them unworthy of the cause. An emissary, deputed to report upon the political state of the borough, had described the voters as mere dependants on the haughty purse-proud proprietor of Cro' Martin, who seemed, even without an effort, to nominate the sitting member.

The great measure of the year '29—the Catholic Relief Bill—had now, however, suggested to even more apathetic constituencies the prospect of a successful struggle. The thought of being represented by "one of their own sort" was no mean stimulant to exertion; and the leading spirits of the place had frequently conferred together as to what steps should be taken to rescue the borough from the degrading thraldom of an aristocratic domination. Lord Kilmorris, it is true, was rather popular with them than the reverse. The eldest son of an Earl, who only cared to sit in Parliament on easy terms, till the course of time and events should call him to the Upper House, he never took any very decided political line, but sat on Tory benches and gave an occasional vote to Liberal measures, as though foreshadowing that new school who were to take the field under the middle designation of Conservatives. Some very remote relationship to Lady Dorothea's family had first introduced him to the Martins' notice; and partly from this connection, and partly because young Harry Martin was too young to sit in Parliament, they had continued to support him to the present time.

Mr. Martin, himself, cared very little for politics; had he even cared more he would not have sacrificed to them one jot of that indolent, lazy, apathetic existence which alone he seemed to prize. He was rather grateful than otherwise to Lord Kilmorris for taking upon him the trouble of a contest, if there should be such a thing. His greatest excuse through life, at least to himself, had ever been, that he was "unprepared." He had been in that unhappy state about everything since he was born, and so, apparently, was he destined to continue to the very last. With large resources, he was never prepared for any sudden demand for money. When called on for any exertion of mind or body—when asked to assist a friend, or rescue a relation from difficulty, he was quite unprepared; and so convinced was he that this was a fatality under which he laboured, that no sooner had he uttered the expression than he totally absolved himself from every shadow of reproach that might attach to his lukewarmness.

The uncontrolled position he occupied, joined to the solitary isolation in which he lived, had doubtless engendered this cold and heartless theory. There was no one to dispute his will—none to gainsay his opinions. There was not for him any occasion for the healthful exertion which is evoked by opposition, and he sunk gradually down into a moping, listless, well-meaning, but utterly good-for-nothing gentleman, who would have been marvellously amazed had any one arraigned him for neglect of his station and its great requirements.

That such an insolent possibility could be, was only demonstrated to him in that morning's newspaper. To be called a despot was bad enough, but a petty despot—and to be told that such despotism was already doomed—aroused in him a degree of indignation all the more painful that the sensation was one he had not experienced for many a year back. Whose fault was it that such an impertinence had ever been uttered? Doubtless, Kilmorris's. Some stupid speech, some absurd vote, some ridiculous party move had brought down this attack upon him; or perhaps it was Mary, with her new-fangled ideas about managing the estate, her school-houses, and her model-farms. The ignorant people had possibly revolted against her interference; or it might be Lady Dorothea herself, whose haughty manner had given offence; at all events, *he* was blameless, and strange to say, either he was not perfectly assured of the fact, or that the assumption was not pleasant, but he seemed very far from being satisfied with the explanation. In the agitated mood these feelings produced, a servant came to inform him that Mr. Scanlan had just arrived.

"Say I'm out—I'm unwell—I don't feel quite myself to-day. Call Miss Mary to him." And with an impatient gesture he motioned the servant away.

"Miss Mary will be down in a few minutes, Sir," said the man, entering the room where Mr. Scanlan stood arranging his whiskers before the chimney-glass, and contemplating with satisfaction his general appearance.

"It was Mr. Martin himself, Thomas, that I wanted to see."

"I know that, sir, but the Master isn't well this morning; he told me to send Miss Mary to you."

"All right," said Scanlan, giving a finishing touch to the tie of his cravat, and then gracefully bestowing his person into an easy-chair. To common observation he looked perfectly unconcerned in every gesture, and yet no man felt less at his ease at that moment than Mr. Maurice Scanlan; and though the cause involves something like a secret, the reader shall know it. Mr. Scanlan had seen a good deal of the world—that is, of *his* world.

He had mixed with Barristers and Solicitors, "Silk Gowns," Masters in Chancery, and even Puisne Judges had he come into contact with; he had mingled in turf experiences with certain sporting Lords and Baronets, swapped horses, and betted and handicapped with men of fortune; he had driven trotting-matches, and ridden hurdle-races against young heirs to good estates, and somehow always found himself not inferior in worldly craft and address to those he came into contact with—nay, he even fancied that he was occasionally rather a little more wide-awake than his opponents; and what with a little blustering, here, a little blarney, there, a dash of mock frankness to this man, or an air of impulsive generosity to the other—an accommodating elasticity, in fact, that extended to morals, manners, and principles—he found that he was, as he himself styled it, "a fair match with equal weights for anything going." There was but one individual alone in presence of whom he in reality felt his own inferiority deeply and painfully; strange to say, that was Miss Martin! At first sight this would seem almost unintelligible. She was not either a haughty beauty, presuming on the homage bestowed upon her by high and distinguished admirers, nor was she any greatly gifted and cultivated genius, dominating over lesser intelligences by the very menace of her acquirements. She was simply a high-spirited, frank, unaffected girl, whose good breeding and good sense seemed alike instinctive, and, who read with almost intuition the shallow artifices by which such natures as Scanlan's impose upon the world. She had seen him easily indolent with her uncle, obsequiously deferential to my Lady, all in the same breath, while the side-look of tyranny he could throw a refractory tenant appeared just as congenial to his nature.

It was some strange consciousness which told him he could not deceive *her*, that made Scanlan ever abashed in her presence, and by the self-same impulse was it that she was the only one in the world for whose good esteem he would have sacrificed all he possessed.

While he waited for her coming he took a leisurely survey of the room. The furniture, less costly and rich than at Cro' Martin, was all marked by that air of propriety and comfort so observable in rich men's houses. There were the hundred appliances of ease and luxury, that show how carefully the most trifling inconveniences are warded off, and the course of daily life rendered as untroubled as mere material enjoyments can secure. Scanlan sighed deeply, for the thought crossed his mind how was a girl brought up in this way ever to stoop to ally her fortune to a man like him? Was it, then, possible that he nourished such a presumption? Even so. Maurice was of an aspiring turn; he had succeeded in twenty things that a dozen years past he had never dared to dream of. He had dined at tables, and driven with men whose butlers and valets he once deemed very choice company; he had been the guest at houses where once his highest ambition had been to see the interior as a matter of curiosity. "Who could say where he might be at last?" Besides this, he knew from his own knowledge of family matters that she had no fortune, that her father was infinitely more likely to leave debts than an inheritance behind him, and that her uncle was the last man in the world ever to think of a marriage-portion for one he could not afford to part with. There was, then, no saying what turn of fortune might present him in an admissible form as a suitor. At all events, there was no rival in the field, and Maurice had seen many a prize won by a "walk over" purely for want of a competitor in the race.

Notwithstanding all these very excellent and reassuring considerations, Maurice Scanlan could not overcome a most uncomfortable sense of awkwardness as Mary Martin entered the room, and saluting him with easy familiarity, said, "I'm quite ashamed of having made you wait, Mr. Scanlan; but I was in the village when I got my uncle's message. I find that he is not well enough to receive you, and if I can ——"

"I'm sure it's only too much honour you do me, Miss Mary; I never expected to have the pleasure of this interview; indeed, it will be very hard for me to think of business at all at all."

"That would be most unfortunate after your coming so far on account of it," said she, half archly, while she seated herself on a sofa at some distance from him.

"If it were a question about the estate, Miss Mary," said he, in his most obsequious manner, "there's nobody equal to yourself; or if it were anything at all but what it is, I know well that you'd see your way out of it; but the present is a matter of politics—it's about the borough."

"That weary borough," said she, sighing; "and are we about to have another election?"

"That's it, Miss Mary; and Lord Kilmorris writes me to say that he'll be over next week, and hopes he'll find all his friends here as well disposed towards him as ever."

"Have you been to my uncle?" asked Mary, hastily.

"No; and that's exactly what I came about; there was a kind of a coldness—more my Lady's, I think, than on Mr. Martin's part; and Lord Kilmorris feels a kind of delicacy—in fact, he doesn't rightly know how he stands at Cro' Martin"—here he paused, in hopes that she would help him by even a word, but she was perfectly silent and attentive, and he went on—"so that, feeling himself embarrassed, and at the same time knowing how much he owes to the Martin interest ——"

"Well, go on," said she, calmly, as he came a second time to a dead stop.

"It isn't so easy, then, Miss Mary," said he, with a long sigh, "for there are so many things enter into it—so much of politics and party and what not—that I quite despair of making myself intelligible; though, perhaps, if I was to see your uncle he'd make out my meaning."

"Shall I try and induce him to receive you, then?" said she, quietly.

"Well, then, I don't like asking it," said he, doubtfully; "for, after all, there's nobody can break it to him as well as yourself."

"Break it to him, Mr. Scanlan?" said she, in astonishment.

"Faith, it's the very word, then," said he, "for do what one will, say what they may, it will be sure to surprise him, if it does no worse."

"You alarm me, sir; and yet I feel that if you would speak boldly out your meaning there is probably no cause for fear."

"I'll just do so, then, Miss Mary; but at the same time I'd have you to understand that I'm taking a responsibility on myself that his lordship never gave me any warrant for, and that there is not another ——" Mr. Scanlan stopped, but only in time, for, whether it was the fervour in which he uttered these words, or that Miss Martin anticipated what was about to follow, her cheek became scarlet, and a most unmistakable expression of her eyes recalled the worthy practitioner to all his wonted caution. "The matter is this, Miss Martin," said he, with a degree of deference more marked than before, "Lord Kilmorris is dissatisfied with the way your uncle supported him at the last election; he complains of the hard conditions imposed upon him as to his line of conduct in the House; and, above all, he feels insulted by a letter Lady Dorothea wrote him, full of very harsh expressions and hard insinuations—I never saw it myself, but that's his account of it. In fact, he's very angry."

"And means to throw up the borough, in short," broke in Mary.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Mary," said the other, in a half whisper.

"What then?—what can he purpose doing?"

"He means to try and come in on his own interest," said Scanlan, who uttered the words with an effort, and seemed to feel relief when they were out.

"Am I to understand that he would contest the borough with us?"

Scanlan nodded an affirmative.

"No, no, Mr. Scanlan, this is some mistake—some misapprehension on your part; his lordship may very possibly feel aggrieved—he may have some cause, for aught I know, about something in the last election, but this mode of resenting it is quite out of the question—downright impossible."

"The best way is to read his own words, Miss Martin. There's his letter," said he, handing one towards her, which, however, she made no motion to take.

"If you won't read it, then, perhaps you will permit me to do so. It's very short, too, for he says at the end he will write more fully to-morrow." Mr. Scanlan here muttered over several lines of the epistle until he came to the following: "'I am relieved from any embarrassment I should have felt at breaking with the Martins by reflecting over the altered conditions of party, and the new aspect politics must assume by the operations of the Emancipation Act. The old ways and traditions of the Tories must be abandoned at once and for ever; and though Martin in his life of seclusion and solitude will not perceive this necessity, we here all see and admit it. I could, therefore, no longer represent his opinions, since they would find no echo in the House. To stand for the borough I must stand on my own views, which, I feel bold to say, include justice to both of the contending factions.'"

"Admirably argued," broke in Mary. "He absolves himself from all ties of gratitude to my uncle by adopting principles the reverse of all he ever professed."

"It's very like that, indeed, Miss Mary," said Scanlan, timidly.

"Very like it, sir; it is exactly so. Really the thing would be too gross if it were not actually laughable;" and as she spoke she arose and paced the room in a manner that showed how very little of the ludicrous side of the matter occupied her thoughts. "He will stand for the borough—he means to stand in opposition to us?"

"That's his intention—at least, if Mr. Martin should not come to the conclusion that it is better to support his lordship than risk throwing the seat into the hands of the Roman Catholics."

"I can't follow all these intrigues, Mr. Scanlan. I confess to you, frankly, that you have puzzled me enough already, and that I have found it no small strain on my poor faculties to conceive a gentleman being able to argue himself into any semblance of self-approval by such sentiments as those which you have just read; but I am a poor country girl, very ignorant of great topics and great people. The best thing I can do is to represent this affair to my uncle, and as early as may be."

"I hope he'll not take the thing to heart, Miss; and I trust he'll acquit *me* ——"

"Be assured he'll despise the whole business most thoroughly, sir. I never knew him take any deep interest in these themes: and if this be a fair specimen of the way they are discussed, he was all the wiser for his indifference. Do you make any stay in the village? Will it be inconvenient for you to remain an hour or so?"

"I'll wait your convenience, Miss, to any hour," said Scanlan, with an air of gallantry which, had she been less occupied with her thoughts, might have pushed her hard to avoid smiling at.

"I'll be down at Mrs. Cronan's till I hear from you, Miss Mary." And with a look of as much deferential admiration as he dared to bestow, Scanlan took his leave, and mounting to his box, assumed the ribbons with a graceful elegance and a certain lackadaisical languor that, to himself at least, appeared demonstrative of an advanced stage of the tender passion.

"Begad, she's a fine girl; devil a lie in it, but she hasn't her equal! and as sharp as a needle, too," muttered he, as he jogged along the shingly beach, probably for the first time in his whole life forgetting the effect he was producing on the bystanders.

CHAPTER V.

A STUDIO AND AN ARTIST.

"Is my uncle in the library, Terence?" asked Mary of a very corpulent old man, in a red-brown wig.

"No, Miss, he's in the—bother it, then, if I ever can think of the name of it."

"The studio, you mean," said she, smiling.

"Just so, Miss Mary," replied he, with a sigh, for he remembered certain penitential hours passed by himself in the same locality.

"Do you think you could manage to let him know I want him—that is, that I have something important to say to him?"

"It's clean impossible, Miss, to get near him when he's there. Sure, isn't he up on a throne, dressed out in goold and dimonds, and as cross as a badger besides, at the way they're tormenting him?"

"Oh, that tiresome picture, is it never to be completed?" muttered she, half unconsciously.

"The saints above know whether it is or no," rejoined Terence, "for one of the servants told me yesterday that they rubbed every bit of the master out and began him all again, for my Lady said he wasn't half haggard enough, or worn-looking; but by my conscience if he goes on as he's doing he ought to satisfy them."

"Why, I thought it was Henderson was sitting," said Mary, somewhat amused at the old man's commentaries.

"So he was; but they rubbed him out, too, for it seems now he ought to be bald, and they've sent him into Oughterard to get his head shaved."

"And what were *you*, Terry?"

"Arrah, who knows?" said he, querulously. "At first I was to be somebody's mother that was always cryin'; but they weren't pleased with the way I done it, and then they made me a monk, and after that they put two hundred-weight of armour on me, and made me lean my head on my arm as if I was overcome; and faith, so I was, for I dropped off asleep, and fell into a pot of varnish, and I'm in disgrace now, glory be to God! and I only hope it may last."

"I wish I shared your fortune, Terry, with all my heart," said Mary, with some difficulty preserving her gravity.

"Couldn't it catch fire—by accident, I mean, Miss—some evening after dark?" whispered Terry, confidentially. "Them's matarials that would burn easy! for upon my conscience if it goes on much longer there won't be a sarvant will stay in the sarvice. They had little Tom Regan holding a dish of charcoal so long that he tuk to his bed on Friday last, and was never up since; and Jinny Moore says she'd rather lave the place than wear that undacent dress; and whist, there's murder goin' on now inside!" And with that the old fellow waddled off with a speed that seemed quite disproportionate to his years.

While Mary was still hesitating as to what she should do, the door suddenly opened, and a man in a mediæval costume rushed out, tugging after him a large bloodhound, whose glaring eyeballs and frothy mouth betokened intense passion. Passing hurriedly forward, Mary beheld Lady Dorothea bending oves the fainting figure of a short little man, who lay on the floor, while her uncle, tottering under a costume he could barely carry, was trying to sprinkle water over him from an urn three feet in height.

"Mr. Crow has fainted—mere fright, nothing more!" said Lady Dorothea. "In stepping backward from the canvas he unluckily trod upon Fang's paw, and the savage creature at once sprung on him. That stupid wretch, Regan, one of your favourites, Miss Martin, never pulled him off till he had torn poor Mr. Crow's coat clean in two."

"Egad, if I hadn't smashed my sceptre over the dog's head the mischief wouldn't have stopped there; but he's coming to. Are you better, Crow? How do you feel, man?"

"I hope you are better, sir?" said Lady Dorothea, in an admirable blending of grand benevolence and condescension.

"Infinitely better—supremely happy besides, to have become the object of your Ladyship's kind inquiries," said the little man, sitting up, and looking around with a very ghastly effort at urbanity and ease.

"I never knew Fang to bite any one," said Mary.

"Doesn't she, by jingo!" exclaimed the artist, who with difficulty caught himself in time before he placed his hand on the supposed seat of his injuries.

"She shall be muzzled in future," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily, repressing the familiar tone of the discussion.

"I think—indeed I feel sure, I could get her in from memory, my Lady; she's a very remarkable creature, and makes an impression on one." As he uttered these words ruefully, he lifted from the floor the fragment of his coat-skirt, and gazed mournfully at it.

"I suppose we must suspend proceedings," said Lady Dorothea; "though really it is a pity to lose the opportunity of Miss Martin's presence—an honour she so very rarely accords us."

"I think after a few minutes or so, my Lady, I might feel equal," said Mr. Crow, rising and retreating to a wall, with a degree of caution that showed he entertained grave fears as to the state of his habiliments—"I might feel equal, if not exactly to delineate Miss Martin's classic features, at least to throw in——"

"I couldn't think of such a thing; I should be wretched at the idea of engaging your attention at such a moment," said Mary, with a carelessness that contrasted strongly with her words; while she added with earnestness, "Besides, I'm not sure I could spare the time."

"You see, sir," said her Ladyship to the artist, "you have to deal with a young lady whose occupations are like those of a Premier. The Duke of Wellington can vouchsafe a sitting for his portrait, but Miss Martin cannot spare the time for it."

"Nay, aunt Dorothy, if I were the Duke of Wellington I should do as he does. It is being Mary Martin, whose picture can have no interest for any one, enables me to follow the bent of my own wishes."

"Humility is another of her perfections," said Lady Dorothea, with a look that but too palpably expressed her feeling towards her niece.

As Mary was assisting her uncle to get rid of some of his superfluous draperies, neither of them overheard this remark; while Mr. Crow was too deeply impressed with his own calamities to pay any attention to it.

"Mr. Scanlan has been very anxious to see you, uncle," whispered Mary in his ear. "He has something of importance to communicate about the borough."

"Can't you manage it yourself, Molly? Can't you contrive somehow to spare me this annoyance?"

"But you really ought to hear what he has to say."

"I perceive that Miss Martin has a secret of moment to impart to you; pray let me not trouble the interview by my presence," said Lady Dorothea. And she swept haughtily out of the room, throwing a most disdainful glance at her husband as she went.

"There, by George! you've secured me a pleasant afternoon at all events!" said Martin, angrily, to his niece, as, throwing off the last remnant of his regal costume, he rushed out, banging the door passionately behind him.

Mary sat down to compose her thoughts in quiet, for Mr. Crow had previously made his escape unobserved; and truly there was need of some repose for her agitated and wearied faculties. Her uncle's dependence upon her for everything, and her aunt's jealousy of the influence she had over him, placed her in a position of no common difficulty, and one of which every day seemed to increase the embarrassment. For a moment she thought she would have preferred a life of utter insignificance and obscurity, but as suddenly it occured to her: "What had I been without these duties and these cares? For me there are few, if any, of the ties that bind other girls to their homes. I have neither mother nor sister; I have none of the resources which education suggests to others. My mind cannot soar above the realities that surround me, and seek for its enjoyments in the realms of fancy; but, perhaps, I can do better," said she, proudly, "and make of these same every-day materials the poetry of an actual existence." As she spoke she threw open the window, and walked out upon the terrace over the sea. The fishermen's boats were all standing out from shore—a tiny fleet, whose hardy crews had done no discredit to the proudest three-decker. Though the heavy gale of the morning had gone down, it still blew fresh, and a long rolling swell thundered along in-shore, and sent a deep booming noise through many a rocky cavern. High above this deafening clamour, however, rose the hearty cheers of the fishermen as they detected Mary's figure where she stood, and many a tattered rag of showy bunting was hoisted to do her honour. Never insensible to such demonstrations, Mary felt at the moment almost overpowered with emotion. But a moment back and she bewailed her isolation and friendlessness; and see, here were hundreds who would have resigned life in her behalf. Still as the boats receded the wind bore to her ears the welcome sounds; and as she heard them, her heart seemed to expand and swell with generous thoughts and good wishes, while along her cheeks heavy tears were rolling.

"What need have I of other friends than such as these?" cried she, passionately. "*They* understand *me*, and I them; and as for the great world, we are not made for each other!"

"My own sentiments to a 'T,' Miss," said a soft, mincing voice behind her; and Mary turned and beheld Mr. Crow. He had arrayed himself in a small velvet skull-cap and a blouse, and stood mixing the colours on his palette in perfect composure. "I'm afraid, Miss Martin, there's an end of the great 'Historical.' Your uncle will scarcely be persuaded to put on the robes again, and it's a downright pity. I was getting a look of weariness—imbecility I might call it—into his features that would have crowned the work."

"I don't think I ever knew what your subject was!" said she, half indolently.

"The Abdication of Charles V., Miss Martin," said he, proudly. "This is the fourteenth time I have depicted it; and never, I am bound to say, with more favourable 'studies.' Your uncle is fine; my Lady, gorgeous; I don't say what I'd like of another lovely and gifted individual; but even down to that old rogue of a butler that would insist on taking snuff through the bars of his helmet, they were all grand, Miss—positively grand!" Seeing that she appeared to bestow some attention to him, Mr. Crow went on: "You see, Miss, in the beginning of a great effort of this kind there is no progress made at all. The sitters keep staring at one another, each amused at some apparent absurdity in costume or attitude; and then, if you ask them to call up a look of love, hate, jealousy, or the like,—it's a grin you get—a grin that would shame a hyena. By degrees, however, they grow used to the situation; they 'tone down,' as one might say, and learn to think less of themselves, and be more natural. It was sheer fatigue, downright exhaustion, and nothing else, was making your uncle so fine; and if he could have been kept on low diet—I didn't like to mention it, though I often wished it—I'd have got a look of cadaverous madness into his face that would have astonished you."

By this time Mr. Crow had approached his canvas, and was working away vigorously, the action of his brush appearing to stimulate his loquacity. Mary drew near to observe him, and insensibly felt attracted by that fascination which the progress of a picture invariably possesses.

"This is the Queen," continued he; "she's crying—as well she might,—she doesn't rightly know whether the old fellow's out of his mind or not; she has her misgivings, and she doesn't half like that old thief of a Jesuit that's whispering in the King's ear. This was to be you, Miss Martin; you were betrothed to one of the young Princes, but somehow you weren't quite right in your head, and you are looking on, rather more amused, you perceive, than in any way moved; you were holding up your beautiful petticoat, all covered with gold and precious stones, as much as to say, 'Ain't I fine this morning?" when you heard the herald's trumpet announce the Prince of Orange; and there he is—or there he ought to be—coming in at the door. There's a chap pulling the curtain aside; but I suppose, now," added he, with a sigh, "we'll never see the Prince there!"

"But where could you have found a study for your Prince, Mr. Crow?"

"I have him here, Miss," said Crow, laying down his brush to take a small sketch-book from the pocket of his blouse. "I have him here; and there wouldn't have been a finer head in the canvas—pale, stern-looking, but gentle withal; a fellow that would say 'Lead them to the scaffold,' as easy as winking, and that would tremble and falter under the eye of a woman he loved. There he is, now—the hair, you know, I put in myself, and the bit of beard, just for a little Titian effect, but the eyes are his own, and the mouth not as good as his own."

"It's a striking head, indeed," said Mary, still contemplating it attentively.

"That's exactly what it is; none of your common brain-boxes, but a grand specimen of the classic head, civilised down to a mediæval period; the forty-first descendant of an Emperor or a Proconsul, living at the Pincian Hall, or at his Villa on the Tiber, sitting for his likeness to Giordano."

"There's a painful expression in the features, too," added she, slowly.

"So there is; and I believe he's in bad health."

"Indeed!" said Mary, starting. "I quite forgot there was an original all this time."

"He's alive; and what's more, he's not a mile from where we're standing." Mr. Crow looked cautiously about him as he spoke, as if fearful of being overheard, and then approaching close to Miss Martin, and dropping his voice to a whisper, said, "I can venture to tell you what I daren't tell my Lady—for I know well if she suspected who it was would be the Prince of Orange, begad I might abdicate too, as well as the King. That young man there is the son of a grocer in Oughterard—true, every word of it—Dan Nelligan's son! and you may fancy now what chance he'd have of seeing himself on that canvas if her Ladyship knew it."

"Is this the youth who has so distinguished himself at College?" asked Mary.

"The very one. I made that sketch of him when he was reading for the medal; he didn't know it, for I was in a window opposite, where he couldn't see me; and when I finished he leaned his chin in his hand and looked up at the sky, as if thinking, and the expression of his up-turned face, with the lips a little apart, was so fine that I took it down at once, and there it is," said he, turning over the page and presenting a few pencil lines lightly and spiritedly drawn.

"A young gentleman left this packet, Miss Mary, and said it was for you," said a servant, presenting a small sealed enclosure. Mary Martin blushed deeply, and she opened the parcel, out of which fell her own glove, with a card.

"The very man we were talking of," said Mr. Crow, lifting it up and handing it to her. "Joseph Nelligan. That's like the old proverb; talk of the ——" but she was gone ere he could finish his quotation.

"There she goes," said Crow, sorrowfully, "and if she'd have stayed ten minutes more I'd have had her all complete!" and he contemplated with glowing satisfaction a hasty sketch he had just made in his book. "It's like her—far more than anything I have done yet; but after all ——" and he shook his head mournfully as he felt the poor pretension of his efforts. "Small blame to me to fail, anyhow," added he, after a pause, "It would take Titian himself to paint her; and even he couldn't give all the softness and delicacy of the expression—that would take Raffaelle; and Vandyke for her eyes, when they flash out at times; and Giordano for the hair. Oh, if he could have seen it just as I did a minute ago, when the wind blew it back, and the sunlight fell over it! Arrah!" cried he, impatiently, as with a passionate gesture he tore the leaf from his book and crushed it in his hand—"arrah! What right have I even to attempt it?" And he sat down, covering his face with his hands, to muse and mourn in silence.

Simpson—or as he was more generally known, Simmy Crow—was neither a Michael Angelo nor a Raffaelle, but he was a simple-minded, honest-hearted creature, whose life had been a long hand-to-hand fight with fortune. Originally a drawing-master in some country academy, the caprice—for it was little else—of a whimsical old lady had sent him abroad to study that is, sent him to contemplate the very highest triumphs o genius with a mind totally unprepared and uncultivated—t gaze on the grandest conceptions without the shadow of a clu to them—and to try and pick up the secrets of art when h stood in utter ignorance of its first principles. The consequence was, he went wild, in the enthusiasm of his admiration; he became a passionate worshipper at the shrine, but never essayed to be priest at the altar. Disgusted and dispirited by his own miserable attempts, he scarcely ever touched a pencil, but roved from city to city, and from gallery to gallery entranced—enchanted by a fascination that gradually insinuated itself into his very being, and made up the whole aim and object of his thoughts. This idolatry imparted an ecstasy to his existence that lifted him above every accident of fortune;—poor, hungry, and ill-clad, he still could enter a gallery or a church—sit down before a Guido or a Rembrandt, and forget all, save the glorious creation before him. By the sudden death of his patroness he was left, without a shilling, hundreds of miles from home. Humble as his requirements were, he could not supply them; he offered to teach, but it was in a land where all have access to the best models; he essayed to copy, but his efforts were unsaleable. To return home to his country was now his great endeavour, and after innumerable calamities and reverses, he did arrive in England, whence he made his way to Ireland, poorer than he had quitted it.

Had he returned in better plight—had he come back with some of the appearance of success, the chances are that he might have thriven on the accidents of fame; but he was famishing and in beggary. Some alleged that he was a worthless fellow, who had passed a life of idleness and debauch; others, that he was not without ability, but that his habits of dissipation rendered him hopeless; and a few—a very few—pitied him as a weak-brained enthusiast, who had no bad about him, but was born to failure!

In his utter destitution he obtained work as a house-painter—an employment which he followed for three or four years, and in which capacity he had been sent by his master to paint some ornamental stucco-work at Cro' Martin. The ability he displayed attracted Lady Dorothea's notice, and she engaged him to decorate a small garden villa with copies from her own designs. He was entirely successful, and so much pleased was her ladyship, that she withdrew him from his ignoble servitude and attached him to her own household, where now he had been living two years, the latter half of which period had been passed in the great work of which we have already made some mention. It so chanced, that poor Simmy had never sold but two copies in his life: one was the abdication of Charles V., the other, the Finding of Moses; and so, out of gratitude to these successes, he went on multiplying new versions of these subjects *ad infinitum*, eternally writing fresh variations on the old themes, till the King and the Lawgiver filled every avenue of his poor brain, and he ceased to have a belief that any other story than these could be the subject of high art.

Happy as he now was, he never ceased to feel that his position exposed him to many an ungenerous suspicion. "They'll say I'm humbugging this old lady," was the constant self-reproach he kept repeating. "I know well what they'll think of me—I think I hear the sneering remarks as I pass." And so powerfully had this impression caught hold of him, that he vowed, come what would of it, he'd set out on his travels again, and face the cold stern world, rather than live on what seemed to be the life of a flatterer and a sycophant. He could not, however, endure the thought of leaving his "Abdication" unfinished, and he now only remained to complete this great work. "Then I'm off," said he; "and then they'll see if poor Simmy Crow was the fellow they took him for." Better thoughts on this theme were now passing through his mind, from which at last he aroused himself to proceed with his picture. Once at work, his spirits rose; hopes flitted across his brain, and he was happy. His own creations seemed to smile benignly on him, too, and he felt towards them like a friend, and even talked with them, and confided his secret thoughts to them.

In this pleasant mood we shall leave him then, nor shall we linger to listen to the avowals he is making of his upright intentions, nor his willingness to bear the hardest rubs of fortune, so that none can reproach him for a mean subserviency.

CHAPTER VI.

A DASH OF POLITICS.

"WELL, what is it, Molly—what is it all about?" said Martin, as Mary entered the library, where he was sitting with an unread newspaper stretched across his knee.

"It is a piece of news Scanlan has brought, uncle, and not of the most agreeable kind, either."

"Then I'll not hear more of it," broke he in, pettishly.

"But you must, uncle, since without your own counsel and advice nothing can be done."

"Do nothing then," added he, sulkily.

"Come—come—I'll not let you off thus easily," said she, passing an arm over his shoulder. "You know well I'd not tease you if it could be avoided, but here is a case where I can be no guide. It is a question of the borough. Lord Kilmorris thinks himself strong enough to stand on his own merits, and repudiates your aid and his own principles together." Martin's attention being now secured, she went on: "He says—at least as well as I can follow his meaning—that with this new measure must come a total change of policy—abrogating all old traditions and old notions. That *you*, of course, are little likely to adopt this opinion, at least at once, and so he releases you from all obligations to support him, and himself from all tie to represent *you*."

"This is Lady Dorothy's doing," broke in Martin, passionately; "her confounded letter-writing has brought this upon us. I told her that those fellows were trimming; I warned her that they were only waiting for this Bill to pass, to turn round upon us as a barbarous old remnant of feudal oppression; but he daren't do it, Molly—Kilmorris hasn't a leg to stand upon in the borough. He couldn't count upon twenty—no, not ten votes, without me. It's a scurvy trick, too, and it shan't succeed, if I stand for the borough myself." And he blurted out the last words as though they were the expression of an enmity driven to its last resources.

"No, no, uncle," said she, caressingly; "after all you have yourself told me of a Parliamentary life, that must never be. Its unending intrigues and petty plotting—its fatiguing days and harassing nights—its jealousies, and disappointments, and defeats, all hard enough to be borne by those who must make a trade of their politics, but utterly insupportable to one who, like you, can enjoy his independence. Do not think of that, I beseech you."

"Then am I to see this man carry my own town in my very teeth?" cried he, angrily. "Is that your advice to me?"

"You often spoke of Harry. Why not put him forward now he is coming home?"

"Ay, and the very first thing he'll do will be to resign the seat because he had not been consulted about the matter before the election. You know him well, Molly; and you know that he exchanged into a regiment in India simply because I had obtained his appointment to the Blues. His amiable mother's disposition is strong in him!" muttered he, half to himself, but loud enough to be heard by his niece.

"At all events, see Scanlan," said she; "learn how the matter really stands; don't rely on my version of it, but see what Lord Kilmorris intends, and take your own measures calmly and dispassionately afterwards."

"Is Scanlan engaged for him?"

"I think not. I suspect that negotiations are merely in progress."

"But if he even was," broke in Martin, violently, "I have made the fellow what he is, and he should do as I ordered him. Let him come in, Molly."

"He is not in the house, uncle; he went down to the village."

"Not here? Why didn't he wait? What impertinence is this?"

"He wished to bait his horses, and probably to get some breakfast for himself, which I had not the politeness to offer him here."

"His horses? His tandem, I'll be sworn," said Martin, with a sneer. "I'll ask for no better evidence of what we are coming to, than that Maurice Scanlan drives about the county with a tandem."

"And handles them very neatly, too," said Mary, with a malicious sparkle of her eye, for she couldn't refrain from the spiteful pleasure of seeing her uncle in a regular fury for a mere nothing. All the more salutary, as it withdrew his thoughts from weightier themes.

"I'm sure of it, Miss Martin. I'm certain that he is a most accomplished whip, and as such perfectly sure to find favour in *your* eyes. Let him come up here at once, however. Say I want him immediately," added he, sternly; and Mary despatched a servant with the message, and sat down in front of her uncle, neither uttering a word, nor even looking towards the other.

"After all, Molly," said he, in the quiet, indolent tone so natural to him—"after all, what does it signify who's in or who's out? I don't care a brass farthing about party or party triumphs, and even if I did, I'm not prepared —— What are you laughing at—what is it amuses you now?" asked he, half testily, while she laughed out in all the unrestrained flow of joyous mirth.

"I have been waiting for that confession this half hour, uncle, and really I was beginning to be afraid of a disappointment. Why, dearest uncle, you were within a hair's breadth of forgetting your principles, and being actually caught, for once in your life, prepared and ready."

"Oh, is that it? Is it my embarrassment, then, that affords you so much amusement?"

"Far from it," said she, affectionately. "I was only laughing at that quiet little nook you retire to whenever you ought to be up and doing. Unprepared you say. Not a bit of it. Indisposed, indolent, unwilling, indifferent, any of these you like; but with a mind so full of its own good resources, and as ready to meet every contingency as any one's, don't say you are unprepared. Come, now, bear with me this once, dearest uncle and don't be angry if I throw myself, like a rock or sandbank, betwixt you and your harbour of refuge. But I hear Mr Scanlan's voice, and so I shall leave you. Be resolute, uncle determined, and—'prepared!'" And with a gesture half menace and half drollery, she left the room as the attorney entered it.

Scanlan, like most of those who came but casually in contact with Martin, had conceived a low idea of his capacity—lower by far than it deserved, since behind his indolence there lay a fund of good common sense—a mine, it must be acknowledged, that he seldom cared to work. The crafty man of law had, however. only seen him in his ordinary moods of careless ease and idleness, and believed that pride of family, fortune, and position were the only ideas that found access to his mind, and that by a dexterous allusion to these topics it would always be an easy task to influence and direct him.

"What's this my niece has been telling me of Lord Kilmorris?" said Martin, abruptly, and without even replying to the salutations of the other, who hovered around a chair in an uncertainty as to whether he might dare to seat himself uninvited—"he's going to contest the borough with us, isn't he?"

Scanlan leaned one arm on the back of the chair, and in a half careless way replied:

"He is afraid that you and he don't quite agree, sir. He leans to measures that he suspects you may not altogether approve of."

"Come, come, none of this balderdash with me, Master Maurice. Has he bought the fellows already, or, rather, have you bought them? Out with it, man. What will he give? Name the sum, and let us treat the matter in a business-like way."

Scanlan sat down and laughed heartily for some minutes.

"I think you know me well enough, Mr. Martin, by this time," said he, "to say whether I'm a likely man to meddle with such a transaction."

"The very likeliest in Ireland; the man I'd select amidst ten thousand."

"I'm sorry to hear you say so, sir, that's all," said the other, with a half offended air; "nor do I see that anything in my past life warrants the imputation."

Martin turned fiercely round, about to make a reply which, if once uttered, would have ended all colloquy between them, when suddenly catching himself he said, "Have you taken any engagement with his Lordship?"

"Not as yet, sir—not formally, at least. My Lord has written me a very full statement of his ideas on politics, what he means to do, and so forth, and he seems to think that anything short of a very liberal line would not give satisfaction to the electors."

"Who told him so? Who said that the borough was not perfectly content with the representative, that—that"—he stammered and faltered—"that its best friends had fixed upon, to defend its interests? Who said that a member of my own family might not desire the seat?"

This announcement, uttered with a tone very much akin to menace, failed to produce either the astonishment or terror that

Martin looked for, and actually supposing that the expression had not been heard, he repeated it—"I say, sir, has any one declared that a Martin will not stand?"

"I am not aware of it," said Scanlan, quietly.

"Well, sir," cried Martin, as if unable to delineate the consequences, and wished to throw the weight of the duty on his opponent.

"There would be a warm contest no doubt, sir," said Scanlan, guardedly.

"No, sir; nor the shadow of a contest," rejoined Martin, angrily. "You'll not tell *me* that my own town—the property that has been in my family for seven centuries and more, would presume—that is, would desire—to—to—break the ties that have bound us to each other?"

"I wish I could tell you my mind, Mr. Martin, without offending you; that is, I wish you'd let me just say what my own opinion is, and take it for what it is worth, and in five minutes you'd be in a better position to make up your mind about this matter than if we went on discussing it for a week." There was a dash of independence in his utterance of these words that actually startled Martin; for, somehow, Scanlan had himself been surprised into earnestness by meeting with an energy on the other's part that he had never suspected; and thus each appeared in a new light to the other.

"May I speak out? Well, then, here is what I have to say: the Relief Bill is passed, the Catholics are now emancipated ——"

"Yes, and be ——" Martin caught himself with a cough, and the other went on:

"Well, then, if they don't send one of their own set into Parliament at once it is because they'd like to affect, for a little while at least, a kind of confidence in the men who gave them their liberties. O'Connell himself gave a pledge, that of two candidates, equal in all other respects, they'd select the Protestant; and so they would for a time. And it lies with you, and other men of your station, to determine how long that interval is to last; for an interval it will only be, after all. If you want to pursue the old system of 'keeping down,' you'll drive them at once into the hands of the extreme Papist party; who, thanks to yourselves, can now sit in Parliament; but if you'll moderate your views, take an humbler standard of your own power—conciliate a prejudice, here, obliterate an old animosity, there ——"

"In fact," broke in Martin, "swear by this new creed tha'

Lord Kilmorris has sent you a sketch of in his letter! Then I'll tell you what, sir—I'd send the borough and all in it to the ——"

"So you might, Mr. Martin, and you'd never mend matters in the least," broke he in, with great coolness.

There was now a dead silence for several minutes; at last Martin spoke, and it was in a tone and with a manner that indicated deep reflection:

"I often said to those who would emancipate the Catholics, 'Are you prepared to change places with them? You have been in the ascendant a good many years, are you anxious now to try what the other side of the medal looks like? for, if not, leave them as they are.' Well, they didn't believe me; and maybe now my prophecy is nigh its accomplishment."

"It is very likely you were right, sir; but whether or not, it's the law now, and let us make the best of it," said Scanlan, who had a practical man's aversion to all thet savoured of mere speculative reasoning.

"As, how, for instance—in what way, Mr. Scanlan?" asked Martin, curtly.

"If you'll not support Lord Kilmorris ——"

"That I won't, I promise you; put that clean out of your head to begin with."

"Well, then, there is but one other course open. Come to some compromise with the Romanist party; if you don't like to give them a stray vote—and mark me, they'd make better terms with *you* than with a stranger—but if you don't like that, why take the representation alternately with them."

Martin rose from his chair and advanced close to where Scanlan was sitting, then, fixing his eyes steadfastly on him, said:

"Who commissioned you to make this proposition to *me?*"

"No one, upon my oath. There is not a man breathing who has ever so much as hinted at what I have just said to you."

"I'm glad of it; I'm heartily glad of it," said Martin, calmly reseating himself. "I'm glad there is not another fellow in this county your equal in impudence! Aye, Mr. Scanlan, you heard me quite correctly. I saw many a change going on amongst us, and I foresaw many more; but that a Martin of Cro' Martin should be taught his political duty by Maurice Scanlan, and that that duty consisted in a beggarly alliance with the riff-raff of a county town; that was, indeed, a surprise for which I was in nowise prepared."

"Well, sir, I'm sorry if I have given any offence, said Scanlan, rising, and, in a voice of the most quiet intonation, making his excuses: "Your rejection of the counsel I was bold enough to suggest leaves me, at least, at liberty to offer my services where they will not be rejected so contumeliously."

"Is this a threat, Mr. Scanlan?" said Martin, with a supercilious smile.

"No, sir; nothing of the kind. I know too well what becomes *my* station, and is *due* to *yours*, to forget myself so far; but as you don't set any value on the borough yourself, and as there may be others who do ——"

"Stay and eat your dinner here, Scanlan," said Martin.

"I promised Mrs. Cronan, sir ——"

"Send an apology to her; say it was *my* fault—that I detained you." And without waiting for a reply, Martin sauntered from the room, leaving the attorney alone with his reflections.

CHAPTER VII.

A COLLEGE COMPETITOR.

Young Nelligan had distanced all his competitors in his College career; some who were his equals in ability, were inferior to him in habits of hard and patient labour; and others, again, were faint-hearted to oppose one in whose success they affected to believe luck had no small share. One alone had the honest candour to avow that he deserved his pre-eminence, on the true ground of his being their superior. This was a certain Jack Massingbred, a young fellow of good family and fortune, and who, having been rusticated at Oxford, and involved in some outrage against authority in Cambridge, had come over to finish his College career in the "Silent Sister."

Although Irish by birth, and connected with Ireland by ties of family and fortune, he had passed all his life in England, his father having repaired to that country after the Union, exchanging the barren honour of a seat for an Irish borough for a snug Treasury appointment. His son had very early given proof of superior capacity. At Rugby he was distinguished as a scholar; and in his opening life at Oxford his talents won high praise for him. Soon after his entrance, however, he had fallen into a fast set—of hunting, tandem-driving, and occasionally hard-drinking men—in whose society he learnt to forget all his aim for College success, and to be far more anxious for distinction as a whip, or a stroke-oar, than for all the honours of scholarship. At first he experienced a sense of pride in the thought that he could hold his own with either set, and take the lead in the examination-hall as easily as he assumed the first place in the social meeting. A few reverses, however, taught him that his theory was a mistake, that no amount of ability will compensate for habits of idleness and dissipation, and that the discursive efforts of even high genius will be ever beaten by the steady results of patient industry. Partly indifferent to what had once been his great ambition—partly offended by his failures, Massingbred threw himself entirely into the circle of his dissipated companions, and became the very head and front of all their wildest excesses. An absurd exploit, far more ludicrous than really culpable, procured his rustication; a not less ridiculous adventure drove him from Cambridge; and he had at last arrived in Dublin, somewhat tamed down by his experiences, and half inclined to resume his long-abandoned desire for College distinction.

The habits of the Irish College were strikingly unlike those of either Oxford or Cambridge. Instead of a large class, consisting of men of great fortune and high expectations, he found a very slight sprinkling of such, and even they made up nothing that resembled a party; separated by age, political distinctions, and county associations, all stronger in the poorer county than in the richer one; they held little intercourse together, and were scarcely acquainted.

If there was less actual wealth, there was also less credit to be obtained by an Irish student. The Dublin shopkeeper acknowledged no prestige in the "gownsman;" he admitted him to no special privilege of book-debts, and as the great majority of the students resided with their families in the capital, there was no room for that reckless extravagance so often prosecuted by those who are temporarily removed from domestic supervision.

Massingbred was at first grievously disappointed. There were neither great names nor great fortunes amongst his new associates. Their mode of life, too, struck him as mean and contemptible. There were clever men reading for honours, and stupid men steering their slow way to a degree, but where were the fast ones? where the fellows who could tool a team or steer a six-oar? who could dash up to town for a week's reckless life at Crocky's and Tattersall's, make their book on the Oaks, or perhaps ride the winner at a steeplechase?

It was all grievously slow. Dublin itself was a poor affair. He had few acquaintances, the theatres were bad, and public amusements there were none. His fellow-students, too, stood aloof from him. It was not that he was richer, better dressed, rode blood horses, dined at Morrisson's, wore kid gloves, and carried scented pocket-handkerchiefs. It was not that he had a certain air of puppyism as he wended his way across the courts, or sauntered elegantly into chapel. They could have forgiven any or all of these better than one of his offendings, which was his accent. Strange as it may seem, his English voice and English pronunciation were the most unpopular things about him, and many a real defect in his character might have met a more merciful construction had he given no initial "H" to "humble," and evinced a more generous confusion about his "wills" and "shalls."

Somewhat bored by a life so unlike anything he had ever tried before, partly, perhaps, stimulated to show that he could do something beside canter his thorough-bred along Sackville-street, or lounge in the stage-box in solitary splendour—he went in for honours, and, to the surprise of all, succeeded. In fact, he beat two or three of the distinguished men of his time, till thrown by the chance of events into Nelligan's division, he found at once his superior, and saw that he was in presence of an intelligence considerably above his own. When he had adventured on the struggle and found himself worsted, he acknowledged defeat with all the generosity of an honourable nature, and forcing his way through the crowd as it issued from the examination-hall, was the very first to grasp Nelligan's hand and congratulate him on his success.

"That was all got up—he was bursting with jealousy. The fellow could have strangled Nelligan," muttered one.

"He certainly put a good face on the disaster," said another, more mercifully given; "though I suppose he feels the thing sorely enough at heart!"

That was exactly what he did not, however. Young Massingbred regarded a College distinction as no evidence whatever of a man's attainments. He had seen stupid fellows win the prize for which clever ones strove in vain; but, at all events, he regarded such successes as contributing in nothing to the great race of life, and had even a theory that such early efforts were often the very means of exhausting the energies that should be exerted for the high rewards of the world. Besides this, he felt a pleasure in manfully showing that he was above a petty jealousy, and fairly owning himself beaten in a fair struggle.

"You are the better man, Nelligan," said he, gaily; "I'll not try another fall with you, be assured."

Strange was it that in this very avowal he had asserted what the other felt, in his inmost heart, to be an immeasurable superiority over him; and that, in the very moment of striking his flag, he had proclaimed his victory. To be able to run him so hard for the race and yet not feel the struggle—to strive for the prize and care nothing for defeat, seemed to Nelligan the evidence of an ambition that soared above College triumph, and he could not but envy that buoyant high-hearted temperament that seemed to make light of difficulties and not even feel depressed by a defeat.

"Up to this time these two young men had scarcely known each other, but now they became intimate. The very difference in character served to draw them more closely together; and if Nelligan felt a degree of admiration for qualities whose brilliant display opened a new sense of enjoyment to him, the other was delighted with the gentle and almost childlike innocence of the student whose far-soaring intellect was mastering the highest questions of science.

Massingbred was one of those natures in whom frankness is an instinct. It seems to such a relief to open the secrets of the heart and avow their weaknesses and their short-comings, as though—by some Moral Popery—they would obtain the benefit of a free confession and go forth the better for their candour.

Not only did he tell Nelligan of his own career and its accidents, the causes for which he was not on good terms with his family, and so on, but he even ventured to discuss the public life of his father, and, in a spirit of banter, swore, that to his political subserviency did he owe his whole fortune in life.

"My father was one of the crew when the vessel was wrecked, Nelligan," said he; "there was plenty of talk of standing by the ship to the last and perishing with her. Some did so, and they are forgotten already. My father, however, jumped into the long-boat with a few more, and thought that probably they might find another craft more seaworthy; fortunately he was right, at least assuredly I'm not the man to say he was not."

"But was there no desertion of principle, Massingbred?" said Nelligan.

"No more than there is a desertion of your old coat when you discover it to be too threadbare to wear any longer. Irish Politics—as the men of that day understood them—had become impracticable, impossible, I might say; the only sensible thing to do was to acknowledge the fact. My father was keen-sighted enough to see it in that light, and here's his health for it."

Nelligan was silent.

"Come, Joe, out with it. Your family were honest Unionists.

Tell me so frankly, man. Own to me that you and yours look upon us all as a set of knaves and scoundrels, that sold their country, and so forth. I want to see you in a mood of good passionate indignation for once. Out with it, boy; curse us to your heart's content, and I'll hear it like an angel, for the simple reason that I know it to be just. You won't, won't you? Is your anger too deep for words? or are there any special and peculiar wrongs that make your dark consuming wrath too hot for utterance?"

Nelligan was still silent; but the blush which now covered his face had become almost purple. The allusion to his family as persons of political importance struck him, and for the first time, with a sense of shame. What would Massingbred think of them if he knew their real station? what would he think of *him* for having concealed it? Had he concealed it? had he ever divulged the truth? He knew not; in the whirlwind of his confusion he knew nothing. He tried to say some words to break the opprestive silence that seemed to weigh him down like an accusation, but he could not.

"I see it all, Nelligan. My foolish affectation of laughing at all principle has disgusted you, but the truth is I don't feel it: I do not. I own frankly that the bought patriot is a ruined man, and there is a moral Nemesis over every fellow that sells himself; I don't mean to say but that many who did so didn't make the best bargain their brains were worth, and my father, for one; he was a man of fair average abilities—able to say his commonplaces like his neighbours—and naturally felt that they would sound as well in England as in Ireland; I don't think he had a single conviction on any subject, so that he really sold a very unsaleable article when he vended himself. But there were others—your Governor for instance—come, now, tell me about him; you are so devilish close, and I want to hear all about your family. You won't; well, I'll give you one chance more, and then ——"

"What then?" asked Nelligan, breathlessly.

"I'll just go and learn for myself."

"How? what do you mean?"

"The easiest way in the world. The vacation begins next Tuesday, and I'll just invite myself to spend the first week of it under your paternal roof. You look terribly shocked, absolutely horrified; well, so you ought. It is about the greatest piece of impertinence I've heard of. I assure you I have a full consciousness of that myself; but no matter, I'll do it."

Nelligan's shame was now an agony. It had never occurred to him in his life to feel ashamed of his station or that of his family, for the simple reason, that he had never made pretension to anything higher or more exalted. The distinctions at which he aimed were those attainable by ability; social successes were triumphs he never dreamed of; but now came the thought of how he should stand in his friend's esteem when the fact was revealed that he was the son of very humble parents, all whose ways, thoughts, and habits, would be apt themes for ridicule and sarcasm. Over and over again had Massingbred annoyed him by the disparaging tone in which he canvassed "small people," the sneering depreciation in which he held all their doings, and the wholesale injustice by which he classed their sentiments with their good manners. It was the one feature of his friend's character that gave a check to his unbounded esteem for him. Had he not possessed this blemish, Nelligan would have deemed him nearly faultless.

Intensely feeling this, Nelligan would have given much for courage to say: "I am one of that very set you sneer at. All my associations and ties are with them. My home is amongst them, and every link of kindred binds me to them."

Yet, somehow, he could not bring himself to the effort. It was not that he dreaded the loss of friendship that might ensue; indeed, he rather believed that such would not occur; but he thought that a time might come when that avowal might be made with pride, and not in humiliation, when he should say: "My father, the little shopkeeper of Oughterard, gave me the advantages by which I became what I am. The class you sneer at had yet ambitions high and daring as your own; and talents to attain them, too! The age of noble and serf has passed away, and we live in a freer and more generous era, when men are tested by their own worth; and if birth and blood would retain their respect amongst us, it is by contesting with us more humbly-born, the prizes of life." To have asserted these things now, however, when he was nothing, when his name had no echo beyond the walls of a College, would have seemed to him an intolerable piece of presumption, and he was silent.

Massingbred read his reserve as proceeding from displeasure, and jestingly said:

"You mustn't be angry with me, Joe. The boldness of men like me is less impudence than you take it for, since—should I fulfil my threat, and pay your father a visit—I'd neither show surprise nor shame if he refused to receive me. I throw over all the claims of ceremony, but at the same time I don't want to impose the trammels on my friends. They are free to deal with me as frankly—ay, and as curtly, as I have treated them; but enough of all this. Let us talk of something else."

And so they did, too; of their college life and its changeful fortunes—of their companions and their several characters, and of the future itself, of which Massingbred pretended to read the fate, saying: "You'll be something wonderful one of these days, Joe. I have it as though revealed to me—*you* astonishing the world by your abilities, and winning your way to rank and eminence; while *I*, like a sign-post that points to the direction, shall stand stock-still, and never budge an inch, knowing the road, but not travelling it."

"And why should it be so, Mass, when you have such a perfect consciousness of your powers for success?"

"For the simple reason, my boy, that I know and feel how the cleverness which imposes upon others has never imposed upon myself. The popular error of a man's being able to do fifty things which he has not done from idleness, apathy, carelessness, and so on, never yet deceived *me*, because I know well that when a fellow has great stuff in him it will come out, whether he likes or not. You might as well say, that the grapes in a wine-vat could arrest their own process of fermentation, as that a man of real genius—and mind, I am now speaking of no other—could suppress the working of his intelligence, and throw his faculties into torpor. The men who do nothing are exactly the men who can do no better. Volition, energy, the strong impulse for action, are part and parcel of every really great intellect; and your 'mute inglorious Milton,' only reminds me of the artist who painted his canvas all red to represent the passage of the Egyptians through the Red Sea. Believe me, you must take all untried genius in the same scale of credit as that by which you have fancied the chariots and horsemen submerged in the flood. They are there, if you like, and if you don't ——"

"Your theory requires that all men's advantages should be equal, their station alike, and their obstacles the same. Now, they are not so. See, for instance, in our University here. *I* am debarred from the fellowship-bench—or at least from attempting to reach it—because I am a Papist."

"Then turn Protestant; or if that doesn't suit you, address yourself to kick down the barrier that stands in your way. By-the-by, I didn't know you were a Roman; how comes that? Is it a family creed, or was it a caprice of your own?"

"It is the religion my family have always professed," said Nelligan, gravely.

"I have no right to speak of these subjects, because I have never felt strongly enough on them to establish strong convictions; but it appears to me, that if I were you—that is, if I had *your* head on *my* shoulders, I should think twice ere I'd sacrifice my whole future out of respect for certain dogmas that no more interfere with one's daily life and opinions than some obsolete usage of ancient Greece has a bearing upon a modern suit in Chancery. There, don't look fretful and impatient; I don't want to provoke you, nor is it worth your while to bring your siege artillery against my card-house. I appreciate everything you could possibly adduce by anticipation, and I yield myself as vanquished."

Thus, half in earnest, half jestingly, Massingbred talked away, little thinking how deeply many a random speech entered into his friend's heart, taking firm root there to grow and vegetate hereafter. As for himself, it would have been somewhat difficult to say how far his convictions ever went with his words. Any attempt to guide and direct him was, at any time, enough to excite a wilful endeavour to oppose it, and whatever savoured of opposition immediately evoked his resistance. The spirit of rebellion was the key-note of his character; he could be made anything, everything, or nothing; as authority, or, as he would have styled it, tyranny, decided.

It was just at this very moment that an incident occured to display this habit of his mind in its full force. His father, by employing much private influence and the aid of powerful friends, had succeeded in obtaining for him the promise of a most lucrative civil appointment in India. It was one of those situations which in a few years of very moderate labour, secure an ample fortune for the possessor. Mr. Massingbred had forgotten but one thing in all the arrangement of this affair, which was to apprise his son of it beforehand, and make him, as it were, a part of the plot. That one omission, however, was enough to secure its failure.

Jack received the first tidings of the scheme when it was a fact—not a speculation. It was a thing done, not, to do, and consequently a "gross piece of domestic cruelty to dispose of him and his future by an arbitrary banishment to a distant land, linking him with distasteful duties, uncongenial associates," and the rest of it. In a word, it was a case for resistance, and he did resist, and in no very measured fashion either. He wrote back a pettish and ill-tempered refusal of the place, sneered at the class by whom such appointments were regarded as prizes, and cooly said, that "it was quite time enough to attach himself to the serious business of life when he had tasted something of the pleasures that suited his time of life; besides," added he, "I must see which way my ambitions point, perhaps to a seat on the Treasury benches, perhaps to a bullock-team, a wood-axe, and a rifle in a new settlement. Of my resolves on either head, or on anything between them, you shall have the earliest possible intimation from your devoted, but perhaps not very obedient, to command,

"J. M."

His father rejoined angrily and peremptorily. The place had cost him everything he could employ or enlist of friendly patronage; he made the request assume all the weight of a deep personal obligation, and now the solicitation and the success were all to go for nothing. What if he should leave so very gifted a young gentleman to the unfettered use of his great abilities? What if he abstained from any interference with one so competent to guide himself? He threw out these suggestions too palpably to occasion any misconception, and Jack read them aright. "I'm quite ready for sea whenever you are pleased to cut the painter," said he; and the correspondence concluded with a dry intimation that two hundred a year, less than one-half of his former allowance, should be paid into Coutts's for his benefit, but that no expenditure above that sum would be repaid by his father.

"I'll emigrate—I'll agitate—I'll turn author, and write for the reviews—I'll correspond with the newspapers—I'll travel in Africa—I'll go to sea—be a pirate"—in fact, there was nothing for which he thought his capacity unequal, nor anything against which his principles would revolt. In speculation only, however, for, in sober reality, he settled down into a mere idler—discontented, dreamy, and unhappy.

Little momentary bursts of energy would drive him now and then to his books, and for a week or two he would work really hard, when a change as sudden would come over him, and he would relapse into his former apathy. Thus was it that he had lived for some time after the term had come to an end, and scarcely a single student lingered within the silent courts. Perhaps the very solitude was the great charm of the place;

there was that in his lonely, unfriended, uncompanionable existence that seemed to feed the brooding melancholy in which he indulged with all the ardour of a vice. He liked to think himself an outcast and forgotten. It was a species of flattery that he addressed to his own heart when he affected to need neither sympathy nor affection. Still his was not the stuff of which misanthropy is fashioned, and he felt acutely the silence of his friend Nelligan, who had never once written to him since they parted.

"I'd scarcely have left *him* here," said he to himself one day; "had *he* been in my position, I'd hardly have quitted *him* under such circumstances. He knew all about my quarrel with my father. He had read our letters on each side. To be sure he had condemned *me*, and taken the side against me, still, when there was a breach, and that breach offered no prospect of reconciliation, it was but scant friendship to say good-by, and desert me. He might, at least, have asked me down to his house. I'd not have gone—that's certain. I feel myself very poor company for myself, and I'd not inflict my stupidity upon others. Still, *he* might have thought it kind or generous. In fact, in such a case I would have taken no refusal—*I*'d have insisted."

What a dangerous hypothesis it is when we assume to act for another; how magnanimously do we rise above all meaner motives, and only think of what is generous and noble; how completely we discard every possible contingency that could sway us from the road of duty, and neither look right nor left on our way to some high object. Jack Massingbred arguing thus, ended by thinking himself a very fine fellow, and his friend a very shabby one—two conclusions that, strangely enough, did not put him into half as much good-humour with the world as he expected. At all events, he felt very sore with Nelligan, and had he known where to address him, would have written a very angry epistle of mock gratitude for all his solicitude in his behalf; very unfortunately, however, he did not know in what part of Ireland the other resided, nor did his acquaintance with provincial dialect enable him to connect his friend with a western county. He had so confidently expected to hear from him, that he had never asked a question as to his whereabouts. Thus was it with Massingbred, as he sauntered along the silent alleys of the College Park, in which, at rare intervals, some solitary sizer might be met with—spare, sad-looking figures—in whose features might be read the painful conflict of narrow fortune and high ambition. Book in hand generally, they rarely exchanged a look as he passed them, and Massingbred scanned at his ease these wasted and careworn sons of labour, wondering within himself was "theirs the right road to fortune?"

Partly to shake off the depression that was over him by change of place, and in part to see something of the country itself, Massingbred resolved to make a walking tour through the south and west of Ireland, and with a knapsack on his back, he started one fine autumn morning for Wicklow.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME KNOTTY POINTS THAT PUZZLED JOE NELLIGAN.

THIS true history contains no record of the evening Mr. Scanlan passed at the Osprey's Nest; nor is it probable that in any diary kept by that intelligent individual there will yet be found materials to supply this historical void. Whether, therefore, high events and their consequences were discussed, or that, the meeting was only devoted to themes of lighter importance, is likely to remain a secret to all time. That matters beneath the range of politics occupied the consideration of the parties was, however, evident from the following few lines of a note received by young Nelligan the next morning:

"DEAR JOE,—I dined yestesday at the 'Nest,' and we talked much of you. What would you think of paying a visit there this morning to see the picture, or anything else you can think of? I've a notion it would be well taken. At all events, come over and speak to me here.

"Ever yours,
"M. SCANLAN."

"I scarcely understand your note, Maurice," said young Nelligan, as he entered the little room where the other sat at breakfast.

"Have you breakfasted?" said Scanlan.

"Yes, an hour ago."

"Will you taste that salmon? Well, then, just try Poll Hanigan's attempt at a grouse-pie; let me tell you, there is genius in the very ambition; she got the receipt from the cook at Cro' Martin, and the imitation is highly creditable. You're wrong to decline it." And he helped himself amply as he spoke.

"But this note?" broke in the other, half impatiently.

"Oh—ay—the note; I'm sure I forgot what I wrote; what was it about? Yes, to be sure, I remember now. I want you to make yourself known, up there. It is downright folly, if not worse, to be keeping up these feuds and differences in Ireland any longer; such a course might suit the small politicians of Oughterard, but you and I know better, and Martin himself knows better."

"But I never took any part in the conflict you speak of; I lived out of it—away from it."

"And are, therefore, exactly suited to repair a breach to which you never contributed. I assure you, my boy, the gentry—and I know them well—will meet you more than half-way. There is not a prouder fellow living than Martin there; he has throughout his whole life held his head higher than any man in our county, and yet he is quite ready to make advances towards you. Of course, what I say is strictly between ourselves; but my opinion is, that, if you like it, you may be as intimate up there as ever you were at old Hayes's, at the Priory."

"Then, what would you have me do?" asked Nelligan.

"Just pay a visit there this morning; say that you are curious to see that great picture—and it is a wonderful thing, if only for the size of it; or that you'd like to have a look at Arran Island out of the big telescope at the top of the house; anything will serve as a reason, and then—why, leave the rest to chance."

"But really, Maurice, I see no sufficient cause for all this," said the youth, timidly.

"Look now, Joe," said the other, drawing his chair closer to him, and talking in the low and measured tone of a confidence,—"look now, you're not going to pass your life, as the successor to that excellent man, Dan Nelligan, of Oughterard, selling hides, and ropes, and tenpenny-nails, and making an estate the way old ladies make a patchwork quilt. You'll be able to start in life with plenty of tin and plenty of talent; you'll have every advantage that money and education can give, and only one drawback on your road to success—the mere want of blood—that dash of birth which forms the only real freemasonry in this world. Now mind me, Joe; the next best thing to having this oneself, is to live and associate with those who have, for in time, what with catching up their prejudices and learning their ways, you come to feel very much as they do; and, what is better still, they begin to regard you as one of themselves."

"But if I do not ambition this—if I even reject it?" said the other, impatiently.

"Then all I say is that Trinity College may make wonderful scholars, but turns out mighty weak men of the world!"

"Perhaps so!" said Nelligan, drily, and with a half-nettled air.

"I suppose you fancy there would be something like slavery in such a position?" said Scanlan, with a derisive look.

"I know it!" responded the other, firmly.

"Then what do you say to the alternative—and there is but one only open to you—what do you think of spending your life as a follower of Daniel O'Connell; of being reminded every day and every hour that you have not a privilege nor a place that he didn't win for you; that he opened Parliament to you, and made you free of every guild where men of ability rise to honour? Ay, Joe! and what's a thousand times worse—knowing it all to be true, my boy! Take service with him once, and if you leave him you're a renegade; remember that, and bethink you, that there's no saying what crotchet he may have in store for future agitation."

"But I never purposed any such part for myself," broke in Nelligan.

"Never mind, it will fall to your lot for all that if you don't quickly decide against it. What's Simmy Crow staring at? Look at him down there, he's counting every window in the street like a tax-gatherer." And he pointed to the artist, who, shading his eyes with one hand, stood peering at every house along the little street. "What's the matter, Simmy?" cried he, opening the casement.

"It's a house I'm looking for, down here, and I forget which it is; bother them, they're all so like at this time of the year when they're empty."

"Are you in search of a lodging, Simmy?"

"No, it isn't that!" said the other, curtly, and still intent on his pursuit. "Bad luck to the architect that wouldn't vary what they call the 'façade,' and give one some chance of finding the place again."

"Who is it you want, man?"

"Faix, and I don't even know that same!" replied the artist. "but"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper as he spoke—"he's an elegant study—as fine a head and face and as beautiful a beard as ever you saw. I met him in Kyle's Wood a week ago, begging; and what with his fine forehead and deep-set blue eyes, his long white hair, and his great shaggy eyebrows, I said to myself: 'Belisarius,' says I, 'by all that's grand—a Moses, a Marino Faliero, or a monk in a back-parlour discoursing to an old skull and a vellum folio—any one of these,' says I, 'not to speak of misers, money-lenders, or magicians, as well;' and so I coaxed him down here on Saturday last, and put him somewhere to sleep, with a good supper and a pint of spirits, and may I never, if I know where I left him."

"Three days ago?"

"Just so; and worse than all, I shut up the place quite dark, and only made a hole in the roof, just to let a fine Rembrandt light fall down on his head. Oh, then, it's no laughing matter, Maurice! Sure if anything happened to him ——"

"Your life wouldn't be worth sixpence before any jury in the county."

"Begad! it's what I was thinking; if they wouldn't take it as a practical joke."

"You're looking for ould Brennan!" cried a weather-beaten hag; "but he's gone to Oughterard for a summons. You'll pay dear for your tricks this time, anyhow."

"Come up here, Simmy, and never mind her," said Scanlan; then, turning to Nelligan, he added, "There's not such a character in the county!"

"I want my friend, Mr. Nelligan, here—Mr. Nelligan—Mr. Crow—I want him, I say, to come up and have a look at the great 'Historical'—eh, Simmy!—wouldn't it astonish him?"

"Are you a votary of art, sir?" asked Crow, modestly.

"I've never seen what could be called a picture, except those portraits in the College Examination Hall might be deemed such."

"Indeed, and they're not worthy the name, sir. Flood, mayhap, is like, but he's hard and stiff, and out of drawing; and Lord Clare is worse. It's in the Low Countries you'd see portraits, real portraits! men that look down on you out of the canvas, as if *you* were the intruder, there, and that *they* were waiting to know what brought you. A sturdy old Burgomaster, for instance, with a red-brown beard and a fierce pair of eyes, standing up firm as a rock on a pair of legs that made many a drawbridge tremble as he walked home to dinner on the Grand Canal, at Rotterdam, after finishing some mighty bargain for half a spice island, or paying a million of guilders down as a dowry for that flaxen-haired, buxom damsel in the next frame. Look at the dimples in her neck, and mark the folds in her satin. Isn't she comely, and calm, and haughty, and housewifery, all together? Mind her foot, it isn't small, but see the shape of it, and the way it presses the ground—ay, just so—my service to you; but you are one there's no joking with, even if one was alone with you." And he doffed his hat, and bowed obsequiously as he spoke.

"You're an enthusiast for your art?" said Nelligan, interested by the unmistakable sincerity of his zeal.

"I am, sir," was the brief reply.

"And the painter's is certainly a glorious career."

"If for nothing else," burst in Crow, eagerly, "that it can make of one like me—poor, ignorant, and feeble, as I am—a fellow-soldier in the same army with Van Dyke, and Titian, and Velasquez—to know that in something that they thought, or hoped, or dared, or tried to do, I too have my share! You think me presumptuous to say this; you are sneering at such a creature as Simmy Crow for the impudence of such a boast, but it's in humility I say it, ay, in downright abject humility; for I'd rather have swept out Rembrandt's room, and settled his rough boards on Cuyp's easel, than I'd be a—a—battle-axe guard, or a lord-in-waiting, or anything else you like, that's great and grand at Court."

"I envy you a pursuit whose reward is in the practice rather than in the promise," said Nelligan, thoughtfully. "Men, like myself, labour that they may reach some far-away land of rewards and successes, and bear the present that they may enjoy the future."

"Ay, but it will repay you well, by all accounts," said Crow. "Miss Mary told us last night how you had beat every one out of the field, and hadn't left a single prize behind you."

"Who said this?" cried Joe, eagerly.

"Miss Mary—Miss Martin. She said it was a credit to us all of the west, here, that there was one, at least, from Galway, who could do something besides horse-racing and cock-fighting ——"

"So she did," said Scanlan, interrupting, with some confusion. "She said somebody had told her of young Nelligan. She called you 'Young Nelligan.'"

"No, no; it was to myself she said it, and the words were, 'Mr. Joseph Nelligan;' and then, when her uncle said, 'Why don't we know him? ——"

"My dear Simmy, you make a most horrible confusion when you attempt a story—out of canvas. Mind, I said out of canvas; for I confess that in your grand 'Historical,' the whole incident is admirably detailed. I've just said to my friend here, that he has a great pleasure before him, in seeing that picture."

"If you'll do me the honour to look at it," said Crow bowing courteously, "when you come to dinner to-day."

"Attend to *me*, Joe," said Scanlan, passing an arm with Nelligan's, and leading him away to another part of the room "that fellow is little better than an idiot. But I was just going to tell you what Martin said. 'You are intimate with young Nelligan,' said he; 'you know him well, and you could possibly do, without awkwardness, what with more formality might be difficult. Don't you think, then, that he would possibly waive ceremony ——' "

"I must be off," broke in Crow, hastily. "I have a sitting at twelve o'clock, so I hope we shall see you at seven, Mr. Nelligan—your note said seven, sharp." And without waiting for more, he seized his hat and hurried down the stairs.

"A downright fool!" said Scanlan, angrily. "Mr. Martin said he'd write to you, if—if—if in fact you stood upon that punctilio; but that he'd be all the better pleased if you'd just accept acquaintance as freely as he offered it, and come and dine there to-day, like a friend."

"Isn't there, or has there not, been some difference between him and my father?" asked Joe.

"A trifle—and a mistake; the kind of thing that two men of calm heads, and common sense, could have settled in five minutes, and which, to say the truth, Martin was right in throughout. It's all passed and over now, however, and it would be worse than foolish to revive it. There's Miss Martin!" cried he, "and I have a word to say to her;" and hurried off, without waiting for more. As he passed from the room, however, a letter fell from his pocket, and as Nelligan stooped to take it up he saw that it was addressed to himself. He looked hesitatingly at it for a moment or two, scarcely knowing whether or not he ought to break the seal. "It was meant for me, at all events," said he, and opened it. The contents were as follows:

"Mr. Martin presents his respects to Mr. Joseph Nelligan, and will feel happy if—excusing the want of formal introduction—Mr. Nelligan will admit him to the honour of acquaintance and give him the pleasure of his society at dinner, to-morrow, at seven o'clock. Mr. Martin does not hesitate to say, that to accept this unceremonious proposal, will be felt as a very great favour indeed by him and his family."

"What does Scanlan mean by all this? Why not have handed me this note at once?" was Nelligan's question to himself, as he descended the stairs and gained the street. He was not sorry that Scanlan was not in sight, and hastened homeward to think over this strange communication. Joe well knew that his mother was not peculiarly endowed with worldly wisdom or acuteness, and yet such was his need of counsel at the moment, that he determined, at least in part, to lay the case before her. "She can certainly tell me," said he, "if there be any reason why I should decline this proposal." And with this resolve he entered the cottage.

"Don't you remember Catty Henderson, Joe?" said his mother, as he came into the room, and presenting a young girl, very plainly but neatly dressed, who arose to receive him with an air of well-bred composure—"Catty, that used to be your playfellow, long ago?"

"I didn't know you were in Ireland, Miss Henderson. I should never have recognised you," said Nelligan, in some confusion.

"Nor was I till a few days back," said she, in an accent very slightly tinged with a foreign pronunciation. "I came home on Tuesday"

"Isn't she grown, Joe? and such a fine girl, too. I always said she'd be so; and when the others would have it that your nose was too long for the rest of your features, I said, 'Wait till she grows up—wait till she's a woman;' and see now if I'm not right."

It must be owned that Joe Nelligan's confusion during the delivery of this prophetic criticism was far greater than Catty's own, who received the speech with a low, gentle laugh, while Mrs. Nelligan went on: "I made her stay till you came back, Joe, for I wanted her to see what a tall creature you are, and not more than twenty, her own age to a month; and I told her what a genius you turned out, indeed to the surprise of us all, and myself especially."

"Thank you, mother," said he, smiling.

"No, indeed, my dear, 'tis your father you may thank for all your talents and abilities; a wonderful man he is, beginning the world without a sixpence, and there he is now, with I'm sure I don't know how many hundreds a year in land—ay, Catty, in broad acres; just like any squire in the county. Well, well, there's many a change come over the country since you were here—how many years is it now?"

"Upwards of twelve," said the young girl.

"Dear me, how time flies. It seems like yesterday that you and Joe had the measles together, in the yellow room up at Broom Lodge, and your poor mother was alive then, and would insist on giving you everything cool to drink, just because you liked it, though I told her that was exactly the reason it was sure to be bad for you, for there's nothing so true in life—that everything we wish for is wrong."

"An unpleasant theory, certainly," said Catty, laughing, "but I hope not of universal application, for I have been long wishing to see you again."

"Well, well, who knows whether it may be good or bad," said she, sighing; "not but I'm pleased to see you growing up the image of your poor dear mother—taller, maybe, but not so handsome, nor so genteel-looking; but when you have your trials and troubles, as she had, maybe that will come too, for I often remarked, there's nothing like affliction to make one genteel."

"Why, mother, you are profuse in unhappy apothegms this morning, said Joe.

"And are you coming to stay amongst us now, Catty, or are you going back to France again?" said Mrs. Nelligan, not heeding the remark.

"I scarcely know as yet," replied the young girl. "My father's letter to summon me home, said something about placing me as a governess, if I were capable of the charge."

"Of course you are, my dear, after all your advantages; not but that I'd rather see you anything else—a nice light business, for instance, in baby-linen or stationery, or in Miss Busk's establishment, if that could be accomplished."

A very slight flush—so slight as to be nearly imperceptible—crossed the young girl's cheek, but not a syllable escaped her, as Mrs. Nelligan resumed.

"And there was an excellent opening the other day at the Post here, in the circulating library way, and lending out a newspaper or two. I don't know how much you might make of it. Not but maybe you'd rather be companion to a lady, or what they call a 'nervous invalid.'"

"That, too, has been thought of," said the girl, smiling, "but

I have little choice in the matter, and happily as little preference for one as the other of these occupations. And now I must take my leave, for I promised to be back by two o'clock."

"Well, there's Joe will see you home with pleasure, and I'm sure you have plenty to say to each other about long ago. Not but I hope you'll agree better than you did then. You were the torment of my life, the way you used to fight."

"I couldn't think of trespassing on Mr. Joseph's time; I should be quite ashamed of imposing such trouble on him. So good-by, godmamma—good-by, Mr. Joseph," said she, hurriedly throwing her shawl around her.

"If you will allow me to accompany you," said Joseph, scarcely knowing whether she rejected or accepted his escort.

"To be sure she will, and you have both more sense than to fall out now; and mind, Joseph, you're to be here at four, for I asked Mrs. Cronan to dinner."

"Oh, that reminds me of something," said Joe, hurriedly; and he leaned over his mother's chair, and whispered to her, "Mr. Martin has invited me to dine with him to-day; here is his note, which came to me in rather a strange fashion."

"To dine at the Nest! May I never. But I scarcely can believe my eyes," said Mrs. Nelligan, in ecstasy. "And the honour, and the pleasure, too; well, well, you're the lucky boy."

"What shall I do, mother; isn't there something between my father and him?"

"What will you do, but go; what else would you do? I'd like to know. What will they say at the Post when they hear it?"

"But I want you to hear how this occurred."

"Well, well; I don't care—go you must, Joe. But there's poor Catty walking away, all alone; just overtake her, and say that a sudden invitation from the Martins—mention it as if you were up there every day ——"

But young Nelligan did not wait for the conclusion of this artful counsel, but hurrying after Catty Henderson, overtook her as she had gained the beach.

"I have no need of an escort, Mr. Joseph," said she, good-humouredly. "I know every turn of the way here."

"But you'll not refuse my companionship?" said he. "We have scarcely spoken to each other yet." And, as he spoke, he drew his arm within her own, and they walked along in silence.

"My mother thinks we did nothing but quarrel long ago," said he, after a pause; "but if my memory serves me truly, it was upon this very pathway we once swore to each other vows of a very different kind. Do you recollect anything of that, Miss Henderson?"

"I do, Mr. Joseph," said she, with a sly half-glance as she uttered the last word.

"Then why 'Mr. Joseph?'" said he, half reproachfully.

"Why 'Miss Henderson?'" said she, with a malicious smile at the other's confusion, for somehow Joseph's manner was far less easy than her own.

"I scarcely know why," replied he, after a short silence, "except that you seem so changed—and I myself, too, am probably in your eyes as much altered—from what we both were, that—that ——"

"That, in short, it would be impossible to link the past with the present," said she, quickly; "and you were quite right. I'm convinced the effort is always a failure, and prejudices in a hundred ways the good qualities of those who attempt it. Let us, therefore, begin our acquaintance here—learn to know each other as we are—that is, if we are to know each other at all."

"Why do you say that?" asked he, eagerly.

"For many reasons. We may not meet often; perhaps not at all; perhaps under circumstances where to renew intimacy might be difficult. Assuredly, although the path here might once have sufficed us, our roads in life lie widely apart, now, and the less we travel together the more we shall each go towards his own goal, and—and the less regret we shall feel at parting; and so now, good-by!"

"You wish it?" said he, reproachfully. "You desire this?"

"What matters it whether I wish it or not. I know it must be. Good-by."

"Good-by, then—good-by," said he, affecting as much indifference as he could; and then, slightly raising his hat, he turned away on the road homeward.

Joseph Nelligan's reflections were not of the pleasantest as he sauntered slowly back. He was not exactly satisfied with himself—he felt, he could not just say how, that the young girl had had the mastery over him—she was more calm, or self-possessed—she had more tact, or she knew more of life—had more of self-control, or breeding, or some other quality, whatever it might be, than he had. At all events, he was ill at ease and discontented. Then he doubted whether he ought to have taken her at her word when she talked of parting. It might, possibly, have been meant by her to evoke some show of resistance on his part—that same inequality of station she seemed to hint at might, perhaps, demand from him a greater deference. In fact, whichever way he turned the matter over, he saw little cause for self-gratulation, nor did he discover that it mended matters when he tried to accuse her of French frivolity, and such other traits as he fancied of foreign origin.

In this not over-pleasant mood was it that he re-entered the cottage, where his mother was busy in preparing a very formidable cravat for the approaching dinner-party.

"Ah, Joe!" said she, anxiously, "if you were to dress now, and then stay quiet, you'd be quite fresh when the time came; for remember, it's not like your father you are, that has the world about him, and can converse about everything that comes uppermost; but with all your learning, you know, you always feel somehow ——"

"Stupid, mother?"

"Not stupid, my dear, but depressed—out of spirits in society; so that my advice to you is, now, dress yourself in good time, take a small glass of ginger-cordial, and throw your eye over the second chapter of 'Social Hints,' with an account of conversation before and at dinner, and some excellent advice about 'compliments, meet for every season of the year.'"

"Do you think such preparations quite necessary, mother?" asked Joe, slily; for he rather relished the simplicity of her counsels.

"To be sure I do; for yours is no common difficulty, Joe. If you talk of country matters, you'll get into Kyle's Wood and the Chancery suit; if you touch politics, or religion, it will be worse again. The Martins, I hear, never play cards, so you can't allude to them; and they'll be too grand to know anything about poor Miss Cuddy going off with the sergeant of police, or what Con Kelly did with his aunt's furniture."

"So that really the topics open to me are marvellously few."

"Well, there's shooting; but to be sure you know nothing about that, nor fishing either; and I suppose farming, if you did understand it, wouldn't be genteel. Indeed, I see little that isn't dangerous, except the dearness of everything. I remark that's a subject nobody ever tires of, and all can take their share in."

"And I conclude it to be fact, mother?"

"A very melancholy fact, my dear; and so I said to Betty

Gargan, yesterday. 'It's well for *you*,' said I, 'and the likes of you, that use nothing but potatoes; but think of us, that have to pay sixpence a pound for mutton, six-and-a-half for the prime pieces, and veal not to be had under eightpence.' They talk of the poor, indeed! but sure they never suffer from a rise in butcher's meat, and care nothing at all what tea costs. I assure you I made the tears come into her eyes, with the way I described our hardships."

"So that this will be a safe subject for me, mother?"

"Perfectly safe, my dear, and no ways mean, either; for I always remarked that the higher people are, the stingier they are, and the more pleasure they take in any little sharp trick that saves them sixpence. And when that's exhausted, just bring in the Rams."

"The Rams!"

"I mean my aunt Ram, and my relations in Wexford. I'm sure, with a little address, you'll be able to show how I came to be married beneath me, and all the misery it cost me."

"Well, mother, I believe I have now ample material," said Joe, rising, with a lively dread of an opening which he knew well boded a lengthy exposition, "and to my own want of skill must it be ascribed if I do not employ it profitably." And with this he hurried to his room to prepare for the great event.

The "Gentlemen of England" do not deem it a very formidable circumstance to repair towards seven, or half-past, to a dinner-party, even of the dullest and most rigid kind. There is a sombre "routine" in these cases, so recognised that each goes tolerably well prepared for the species of entertainment before him. There is nothing very exhilarating in the prospect, and as little to depress. It is a leaf torn out of one of the tamest chapters in life's diary, where it is just as rare to record a new dish as a new idea, and where the company and the cookery are both foreknown.

No one goes with any exaggerated expectations of enjoyment; but as little does he anticipate anything to discompose or displease him. The whole thing is very quiet and well-bred, rather dull, but not unpleasant. Now, Joseph Nelligan had not graduated as a "diner out;" he was about as ignorant of these solemn festivals as any man well could be. He was not, therefore, without a certain sense of anxiety as to the conversational requisites for such occasions. Would the company rise to themes, and places, and people of which he had never as much as heard? or would they treat of ordinary events, and if so, on what terms? If politics came to be discussed, would Mr. Martin expect him to hear in silence opinions from which he dissented? Dare he speak his sentiments, at the cost of directing attention to himself?—a course he would fain have avoided. These, and innumerable other doubts, occupied him as he was dressing, and made him more than once regret that he had determined to accept this invitation; and when the hour at last came for him to set out, he felt a sense of shrinking terror of what was before him greater than he had ever known, as he mounted the dreaded steps of the College Examination Hall.

He might, it is true, have bethought him of the fact, that where Simmy Crow and Maurice Scanlan were guests, he too might pass muster without reproach; but he did not remember this, or at least it failed to impress him sufficiently. Nor was his dread without a certain dash of vanity, as he thought of the contrast between the humble place he was perhaps about to occupy at a great man's table, and the proud one he had achieved in the ranks of scholarship and science. Thus musing, he sauntered slowly along till he found himself in front of the little garden of the Osprey's Nest. He looked at his watch—it was exactly seven; so he pulled the bell, and entered.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MARTIN ARMS.

In the small and not over-neat parlour of the Martin Arms at Oughterard, a young man sat at his breakfast, at times, casting his eyes over the columns of the *Vindicator*, and anon, strolling to the window to watch the gathering of the country people at the weekly market. The scene was one of that mingled bustle and languor so characteristically Irish. Cart-loads of turf, vegetables, fruit, or turkeys blocked up the narrow passage between booths of fancy wares, gilt jewellery, crockery, and cutlery; the vendors all eagerly vociferating commendations of their stores, in chorus with still more clamorous beggars, or the discordant notes of vagrant minstrelsy. Some animal monstrosity, announced by a cracked-voiced herald and two clarionets, added to a din, to which loud laughter contributed its share of uproar.

The assemblage was entirely formed of the country people, many of whom made the pretext of having a pig or a lamb to sell the reason of their coming, but, in reality, led thither by the native love of a gathering—that fondness to be where their neighbours were—without any definite aim or object. There was, then, in strong contrast to the anxious solicitation of all who had aught to sell, the dreary, languid, almost apathetic look of the mere lounger, come to while away his weary hour and kill time just like any very bored fine gentleman who airs his listlessness along St. James's-street, or lazily canters his *ennui* down Rotten-row.

Jack Massingbred, for he was the traveller, whose straw hat and knapsack stood upon a table near, was amused at a scene so full of its native characteristics. The physiognomy, the dress, the bearing of the people, their greetings as they met, their conduct of a bargain, all bespoke a nation widely differing from the sister country, and set him a dreaming as to how it was that equality of laws might very possibly establish anything but equality of condition amongst people so dissimilar.

While thus musing, his eye chanced to rest upon the half-effaced inscription over a shop door in front, and where the name of Daniel Nelligan figured as "licensed for all kinds of groceries and spirits." "Nelligan," repeated he to himself; "I shall certainly quiz my friend Joe, when we meet, about his namesake in Oughterard. How good it would be to pick up some details of our friend opposite to torment him with. What rare fun to affect to have discovered a near relative in this man of hides, glue, sugar, and Jamaica rum! Eh, gad, I'll try it." And with this resolve he crossed the street at once, and soon found himself in the compact crowd which thronged the doorway of this popular shop.

It was, indeed, a busy scene, since many who were there came as much sellers as buyers, giving all the complexity of barter to their several transactions. Here, was a staid countrywoman exchanging her spunyarn, or her "cloth," as it is called, for various commodities in tea, candles, and such like; here, a farmer, with a sample of seed oats in his pocket-handkerchief, of which he wanted the value in certain farm utensils; here, was another, with a stout roll of home-made frieze to dispose of; some were even fain to offer a goose or a hen as the medium for a little tobacco, or some equally tempting luxury of cottier life. But there was another class of customers, who, brushing their way through the throng, made for a small, dingy-looking chamber behind the shop, in which Mr. Nelligan performed the functions of banker and money-lender, discounting small bills, advancing loans, and transacting all the various duties of a petty capitalist; means by which, it was alleged, he had already amassed a very ample fortune.

An announcement in writing on the glass-door of this sanctum informed Massingbred that "bank-notes" were exchanged, and "small loans advanced on good security," suggesting to him at once the means of opening an acquaintance with the interior. Without any very definite purpose, however, he now found himself one of a very closely-packed crowd within the chamber. At a small desk, around which ran a railing of about a foot in height, serving, as it were, to "filter the stream" of solicitation that poured in upon him, sat a dark-eyed, bilious-looking man of about fifty; a black wig cut in two deep arches over the temples showed a strongly-formed, massive head, very favourably in contrast to the features beneath it, which were only indicative of intense shrewdness and cunning. The eyes, in particular, were restless and furtive-looking, distrust and suspicion giving their entire expression—qualities it was to be owned in very active employment in the intercourse of his daily life.

The anxious looks around him—careworn, eager, tremulous with anxiety as they were, seemed the very opposite to his own, full of the security that a strong purse bestows, and stern in the conscious strength of his affluence.

"It won't do, Hagan," said he, with a half-smile, as he pushed back through the grating a very dirty discoloured piece of paper. "You'll be off to America before it comes due. I wouldn't take the Lord-Lieutenant's note at six months, as times go."

"See now, Mr. Nelligan," replied the other, pressing his face close to the cage, and talking with intense eagerness. "May I never see Christmas, but I'll pay it. 'Twas marryin' the daughter left me low in cash; but with the blessing of God and your help ——"

"I hope you're more certain of the blessing than the help. What's this with a string round it?" continued Nelligan, addressing another applicant.

"'Tis a roll of notes I wanted to ax your honour about. Molly never 'let on' she had them till Friday last; and now that James is going away and wants a trifle to fit him out ——"

"Why, they're French's Bank, man, that broke years ago; they're not worth a farthing!"

"Arrah, don't say so, and God reward you," cried the poor fellow, while his eyes filled up and his lip trembled convulsively; "don't take the hope out of my heart all at onst. Look at them again, your honour, and maybe you'll think different!"

"If I did I'd be as great a fool as yourself, Patsy. The bank is closed, and the banker dead this many a day, and I wouldn't give you sixpence for sixty thousand of them. Take him out in the fresh air—give him a mouthful of water," added he, hastily, as the wretched countryman staggered back, sick, and almost fainting with the sad tidings.

"Mrs. Mooney," said he, addressing a pale, mild-featured woman in a widow's cap and black gown, "you can't expect to hear from Dublin for a week or ten days to come. It takes some time to administer; but if you are in want of a few pounds ——"

"No, sir, thank you," said she, in a low voice; "but as I can't go back to the place again—as I'll never be able to live there, now ——"

"Don't be in a hurry, Mrs. Mooney; do nothing rash. None of us know what we can do till we're tried. There's Miles Dogherty never thought he'd be paying me that eight pound fifteen he owes me, and see now if he isn't come with it, to-day."

"Faix, and I am not," sturdily responded a very powerfully built man in the comfortable dress of a substantial farmer. "I don't owe it, and I'll never pay it; and what's more, if you get a decree against me to-morrow, I'd sell every stick and stone in the place and go to 'Quaybec.'"

"Indeed you wouldn't, Miles, not a bit more than I'd go and take the law of an old friend and neighbour."

"Faix, I never thought you would," said the stout man, wiping his forehead, and appearing as if he had forgotten his wrath.

"And now, Miles, what about that water-course?" said Nelligan, good-humouredly; "are you content to leave it to any two fair men ——"

As he got thus far, his eye for the first time fell upon Massingbred, who, with folded arms, was leaning against a wall, an attentive spectator of the whole scene.

"That is a stranger yonder; what can he want here?" said Nelligan, who watched the attentive look of Massingbred's face with considerable distrust. He whispered a few words into the ear of a man beside him, who, making his way through the crowd, addressed the young man with,

"It's the master, sir, wants to know if he could do anything for your honour?"

"For *me?* oh, you spoke to *me?*" said Massingbred, suddenly recalled to himself. "Yes, to be sure; I wanted to know—that is, I was thinking ——" And he stopped to try and remember by what device he had purposed making Mr. Nelligan's acquaintance.

While he thus stood doubting and confused, his eyes suddenly met the black, searching, deep-set orbs that peered at him behind the grating, and without knowing how or why, he slowly approached him.

"In what way can I be of any use to you, sir?" said Nelligan, in a tone which very palpably demanded the reason of his presence there.

Jack Massingbred was eminently "cool;" that is, he was possessed of that peculiar assurance which rarely suffers itself to be ruffled by a difficulty. In the intercourse of society, and with men of the world, he could have submitted to any test unabashed, and yet now, in presence of this shrewd-looking and very commonplace personage, he, somehow, felt marvellously ill at ease, and from the simple reason that the man before whom he stood was not of his "world," but one of a set of whose habits and thoughts and ways he was in utter ignorance.

Nelligan's question was a second time addressed to him, and in the same words, before he thought of framing a reply to it. For a second or two it occurred to him to say that he had strolled in, half inadvertently, and apologising for the intrusion, to withdraw; but his pride was offended at the notion of defeat this conduct implied, and with an assumption of that conventional impudence far more natural to him, he said:

"It was your name, sir, attracted me; the name 'Nelligan,' which I read over your door, being that of a very dear and valued friend of mine, suggested to me to inquire whether you might not be relatives."

The cool indifference which accompanied these words, uttered as they were in a certain languid drawl, were very far from predisposing Nelligan in favour of the speaker; while the pretence of attaching any singularity to a name so common as his own struck him at once as indicative of covert impertinence.

"Nelligan is not a very remarkable name down here, sir," drily responded he.

"Very possibly," replied Jack, with all his accustomed ease. "I know little or nothing of Ireland. Your namesake, or your relative, perhaps, was a college friend of mine, but to what part of the country he belonged I never knew."

The words, a "college friend," roused the other's anxiety, and leaning forward eagerly, and dropping his voice to a whisper, he said,

"Where? In what College may I ask, sir?"

"In Trinity, Dublin."

"The Medallist of this year, you mean?" said the other, almost breathless in his anxiety.

"Just so. The same fellow who has been sweeping away all the honours of his day. You have heard of him, it would seem?"

"He is my son, sir. I'm Joe Nelligan's father!"

Massingbred's astonishment did not betray itself by any change of feature; not a word escaped him; but his eye ranged over the scene around him, and came back to rest upon old Nelligan's face with an expression of the calmest meaning.

"What a fortunate accident—for *me*, I mean," continued he. "Joe and I are very dear friends, and it is a great happiness for me to make his father's acquaintance. Is he with you now?"

"No, sir; he's at the sea—a place called Kilkieran, about twenty miles away; but we'll have him back by to-morrow if you'll stay with us, and I'm sure you'll not refuse me that pleasure. The young gentleman who is my son's friend, is mine also, if he'll permit me to call him so; and now just tell me what name shall I say?—who is it that I'm to tell Joe has arrived here?"

"Say that Jack Massingbred is come, and I'll lay my life on't you'll see him here as fast as may be."

"And now, Mr. Massingbred, just take up your quarters with us. Where are you stopping? I'll send over the boy for your trunks, for I needn't say that this must be your home while you stay at Oughterard." The genial tone of warm hospitality in which he now spoke made him seem a very different man from the hard-featured old money-lender he had appeared when Jack first beheld him, and Massingbred returned his cordial shake hands with a pressure equal to his own, while he said,

"Be assured that I accept your offer most heartily. My whole baggage is a knapsack and a fishing-rod, so that if you admit me as your guest you must dispense with all beyond the very humblest requirements. I have no coat, except this on me; and, when I brush my hair, I have dressed for dinner."

"You are amongst very humble people, Mr. Massingbred—a country shopkeeper, and his wife, and son—and they'll be only too happy to feel that you don't despise their company. Come, and I'll show you your room." And so saying, Nelligan led him up a narrow stair, and at the end of a corridor opened a door into a neatly furnished chamber, which looked out into a spacious garden. The whole interior was scrupulously clean and comfortable; and as Jack surveyed his new dominions, he inwardly blessed his good fortune that had piloted him into such a haven.

"I'll just step down and write to Joe. Meanwhile, you'll have your things brought over to you. Make yourself at home here—at least, as much as you can in such a place—and when you want anything, just ask for it." And with these words old Nelligan left him to his own thoughts.

Whatever savoured of an adventure was the delight of Jack Massingbred. He was one of those men whose egotism takes the shape of playing hero to themselves—a tolerably large category amongst the spoiled children of this world. To be thrown into any strange or novel position, with associates he was unused to, and amidst circumstances totally unlike all he had ever met before, was his great happiness; and although, here, there was nothing like actual peril to heighten the zest of the enjoyment, there was a certain dash of embarrassment in the situation that increased its piquancy. This embarrassment lay in his approaching meeting with young Nelligan.

All the reserve his young college friend had maintained with regard to his family was at once explained; and Jack began to think over how often it must have occurred to him to say the most galling and offensive things in his ignorance of Nelligan's real station. "If he had been frank and open with me," said he to himself, "this would never have happened." But therein Jack made two errors, since Nelligan was in nowise bound to make such revelations, nor was Massingbred the man to distinguish himself amongst his associates by a close friendship with the son of a country shopkeeper. He had been trained in a very different school, and taught to estimate his own station by the standard of his companionship. Indeed, he had witnessed the lenity which met his transgressions when they occurred in high company, and saw his father pay the debts he had contracted amongst titled associates with a far more generous forgiveness than had they taken their origin with more plebeian friends. "What could have induced the man to become a Fellow-Commoner," said he, over and over; "it is such a palpable piece of presumption?" The truth was, Jack felt excessively irritated at never having even suspected his friend's pretensions, and was eager to throw the blame of a deception where none had ever been practised.

"They told me I should find everything very different here from in England, but they never hinted at anything like this." There came then another phrase over his reflections, as he asked himself, "But what affair is it of mine? Nelligan never thrust himself on *me*, it was *I* that sought him. He never proposed introducing me to his family, it was I that made them out—I, in fact, who have imposed myself upon them. If *I* deemed the old grocer *infra dig.*, I need never have known him; but I have not felt this to be the case. He may be—indeed, Joe Nelligan's father ought to be—a very superior fellow, and at all events the whole situation is new, and must be amusing."

Such were the course of his thoughts as he arranged his clothes in the little chest of drawers, put out his few books and papers on the table, and proceeded to make himself perfectly at home and comfortable in his new quarters.

The embarrassments of selfish men are always lighter than those of other people, their egotism filling, as it does, such a very large space in the sea of their troubles. Thus was it that Massingbred suffered little discomfort at the thought of his friend Nelligan's probable shame and awkwardness, his thoughts being occupied by how he, clever fellow that he was, had traced out his home and origin—won, by a few words, the old father's esteem, and established himself, by his own sharp wits, a guest of his house.

"It is a downright adventure," said he; he even thought how the thing would tell afterwards at some convivial meeting, and set about dramatising to himself his own part in the incident, to heighten the piquancy of the narrative. He resolved to conform in everything to the habits of the household—to accommodate himself in all respects to old Nelligan's tastes, so that Joe should actually be amazed at the versatile resources of his nature, and struck with astonishment at this new evidence of his powers.

Nor was Mr. Nelligan idle during all this time: the thought of a fellow-Collegian of his son Joe being a guest under his roof was a very proud and inspiring reflection. It was such a recognition of Joe's social claims—so flat a contradiction to all the surmises of those who deprecated his College life, and said "that old Dan was wrong to put his boy into Trinity"—that he already regarded the incident as the full earnest of success.

"What would have brought him here, if it wasn't for Joe? How would he ever have been under my roof, if he wasn't Joe's friend?" There was a palpable triumph here that nothing could gainsay, and with a proud heart he locked up his desk, resolving to do no more business that day, but make it one of enjoyment.

"Who will I get to dine with us," thought he, "since Joe can't have the letter before this evening, and do his best he won't be here before morning?" The question of those who should fill the places around his board was a difficulty he had never experienced before, for Mr. Nelligan was the first man in Oughterard, and never had any trouble about his dinner company. His politics—very decided as they were—drew the line amongst his acquaintances, and the Liberal party well knew that they alone were the partakers of his hospitalities. There now, however, came the thought that the most respectable residents of the town—Dr. Dasy, of the Infirmary; Mr. Scanlan, the Attorney; and Morris Croft, the Adjutant of the Galway ——, were Conservatives. These were the fit company to meet young Massingbred, at least for the first day; afterwards, he might be introduced to their own set. And yet, Father Neal Rafferty would be outraged at all this. Peter Hayes, of the Priory, would never enter his doors again; and Peter Hayes had made a will in favour of Joe Nelligon, and left him every sixpence he had in the world. "What if we mixed them all together?" said Dan, fairly puzzled by all the conflicting interests. "A good dinner, some excellent port wine, and 'lashings' of whisky-punch, might mould the ingredients together—at least, when under the restraint of a stranger's presence—sufficiently to pass muster!"

From his doubts as to how the experiment would succeed, came others as to whether the guests would condescend to meet; and thus his embarrassments went on increasing around him without his finding a way through them.

"That's an elegant salmon I saw Catty bringing home to you, Nelligan?" said a red-faced man, with large white whiskers, and a most watery look in his eyes.

"Yes, Brierley, there's a young gentleman just come down here—a friend of Joe's in College, to stop a day or two with us."

"A nob?" said the other, with a wink.

Nelligan nodded assent, and went on:

"And I'm just bothered how to get two or three, to make company for him."

"If it's grandeur you want, why don't you go over to the barracks there, and ask Captain Downie and the two others? Faix! it's a hearty welcome you'd get, for they've never seen the inside of Cro' Martin since the detachment came here."

"It's my own acquaintances I'd like to ask to my house, Mat Brierley," said Nelligan, proudly; "and the time was when they weren't shy of coming there."

"What do you say to Peter Hayes, then?" said the other. "If you mean to do the civil thing, you'll ask him before he buys that old highwayman of a goose he's cheapening yonder; and there's Father Rafferty in the snuff-shop, and Tom

Magennis, and myself; and that makes six, just the right number for the little round table."

Nelligan paused, and seemed to reflect over the proposition.

"You'll be quizzing the Englishman—'taking a rise' out of the Saxon, Brierley?" said Nelligan, distrustfully.

"Devil a bit; I know better manners than that!"

"Tom Magennis would have at him about politics; I know he couldn't refrain. And I needn't tell you that English notions are not ours upon these topics."

"Give Tom a hint, and he'll never touch the subject."

"And Father Neal, will you vouch for him that he won't attack the Established Church, and abuse the Protestants?"

"That I will, if he's not provoked to it."

"Can you answer for yourself, Mat Brierley, that you won't try to borrow a five-pound note of him before the evening's over?" said Nelligan, laughingly.

"I've a friend here," said Brierley, tapping the other on the breast, "that would never see me in want of such a trifle as that."

Nelligan made no other reply to this speech than a somewhat awkward grimace, and walked hurriedly on to overtake a tall and very fat man that was just turning the corner of the street. This was Father Neal Rafferty. A very flourishing wave of his Reverence's hand, and an urbane bend of his body, betokened the gracious acceptance he gave to the other's invitation; and Brierley walked away, muttering to himself: "They may thank me for this dinner, then; for old Dan was going to feed the 'swells,' if I hadn't stopped him."

CHAPTER X.

A DINNER PARTY.

PEOPLE who live much together, in small and secluded districts, grow at length to feel a very great distrust for all strangers. Their own ways and their own topics have become such a perfect world to them, that to feel ignorant of these themes appears like affectation or contempt; and the luckless man, who drops down into such a "coterie," is invariably deemed impertinent or a fool. Jack Massingbred fully appreciated this difficulty; but it imparted such a piquancy to his "adventure," as he persisted in calling it to himself, that he wouldn't have dispensed with it, had he been able. It was in this temper he entered the room where the guests were now assembled, and, rather impatiently, awaiting his arrival.

It is a very cold, calculating sort of interval, that ten minutes before dinner; and men regard the stranger presented to them with feelings far more critical than kindly. Massingbred did not go through the ordeal unscathed; and it was easy to see in the constraint and reserve of all present, how little his appearance contributed to the promise of future conviviality. He made no effort to dispel this impression, for, after saluting each in turn, he walked to the window, and amused himself with what was passing in the street.

The dinner was announced at last, and passed off drearily enough; none liked to adventure on any topic of local interest, and they knew of little others. Brierley was stiffly polite; the Priest blandly tranquil; the host himself uneasy and anxious; and poor old Peter Hayes, of the Priory, downright melancholy. Massingbred saw the effect he was producing, and saw it with pleasure. His calculation was this. Had I started "at speed" with these fellows, they would have blown me at once. All my efforts to assimilate myself to their tastes, to join in their habits and adopt their notions, would have been detected in a trice. They must be brought to believe that they have made a convert of me themselves; the wider the space between us at first, the greater will be their merit in making me forget it in the end.

As the whisky-punch made its appearance, and the bottle of port was passed up beside the stranger, Massingbred thought the time was come when he might change his tactics, and open the campaign in force. "No," said he, as the host pushed the wine towards him, "I've come over here to try and learn something about Ireland, and I must give myself every advantage of judging from a native point of view. This excellent old port may strengthen a man to stand by many an old prejudice, but my object is to lay in a new stock of ideas, and I'd rather try a new regimen."

"That's your bottle, then, sir. Try that," said Brierley, pushing towards him a small square decanter of a faint greenish fluid.

"That is 'poteen,' Mr. Massingbred," said the host. "It's the small still that never paid the King a farthing."

"I like it all the better, for that reason," said Jack. "There's something independent in the very thought of a liquor that never submitted to the indignity of a guager."

"That's not a very English sentiment, sir," said the priest, slily.

"I don't know whether it be or not," rejoined Massingbred; "but I can neither perceive common sense or justice in a law that will not allow a man to do what he likes with his own. Why, if Parliament declared to-morrow you shouldn't boil your potatoes in Ireland, but eat them fried—or that you shouldn't make bread of your corn, but eat it with milk as the Neapolitans do ——"

"I wish we could do the same here, with all my heart," said the priest. "It's little wheat or even barley-meal one of our poor people ever sees."

"A wet potatoe and water is their diet," said old Hayes, as he sipped his punch.

"I can believe it well," said Massingbred, with great semblance of feeling. "I witnessed dreadful poverty and destitution as I came along, and I couldn't help asking myself—What are the gentry about in this country; do they or do they not see these things? If they do, are they indifferent to them?"

"They are indifferent to them; or even worse, they rejoice in them," broke in a deep-voiced, energetic-looking man, who sat at the foot of the table, and had, although silent, taken a deep interest in the conversation. "They see, sir, in the destitution of Ireland another rivet in the chains of her bondage. As my 'august leader' remarked, it's the rust on the fetters, though—and if it proclaims the length of the captivity, it suggests the hope of freedom."

"Mr. Magennis is the dearest friend and trusty agent of Mr. O'Connell," said Nelligan in a whisper to Massingbred.

"Here's his health, who ever said that!" cried Jack, enthusiastically, and as if not hearing the host's observation.

"That's a toast; we'll all drink—and standing, too," exclaimed Magennis. "'Daniel O'Connell, gentlemen; hip, hip, hurra!'" And the room rang again with the hearty acclamation of the company.

"By Jove! there was something very fine—it was chivalrous—in the way he brought the Catholic question to issue at last. The bold expedient of testing the event by an individual experience was as clever as it was daring," exclaimed Massingbred.

"You were in favour of the measure then, sir?" said Father Neal, with a bland smile that might mean satisfaction or suspicion.

"I was always an Emancipationist; but I am little satisfied with the terms on which the bill has been passed. I'd have had no restrictions—no reservations. It should, according to me, have been unconditional or nothing."

"You've heard the old proverb about half a loaf, sir?" said Hayes, with a dry laugh.

"And a poor adage it is, in its ordinary acceptation," said Jack, quickly. "It's the prompting spirit to many a shabby compromise! What disabilities should apply to any of us here, in regard to any post or position in our country's service, by reason of opinions which are between ourselves and our own hearts—I say any of us, because some here—one I perceive is"—and he bowed to Father Rafferty—"a Catholic; and I for myself avow, that, if for no other reason than this proscription, I'd be on this side."

"You're not in Parliament, sir, are you?" asked old Peter, with a seriousness that sorely tested the gravity of those at either side of him.

"No," said Jack, frankly. "My father and I don't agree on these subjects; and, consequently, though there is a seat in my family, I have not the honour to occupy it."

"Are you any relation to Colonel Moore Massingbred, sir?" asked Magennis.

"His son, sir."

The questioner bowed, and a brief silence ensued; short as it was, it enabled Jack to decide upon his next move, and take it.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I'm fully aware that my name is not a favourite in Ireland; and shall I own to you, till I came to this country myself, I half believed that this same humble opinion of us was to our credit! I used to hear such narratives of Irish barbarism, Irish brutality, priestcraft, superstition, and Heaven knows what besides, that I fully persuaded myself that our small repute was very nigh to a eulogium on us. Well, I came over to Trinity College strongly impressed with the notion that, because I had gained successes at Oxford, here, I should be triumphant. It is in no boastfulness I say that I had acquitted myself well at home; I had attained to rather a reputation. Well, as I said, I came over to Trinity and pitted myself against the best man going, and a very pretty beating he gave me. Yes, gentlemen, he beat me in everything, even in those which we Oxford men fancy our specialities. I soon learned that I had not the shadow of a pretension to stand against him, and I learned, also, that it was no disgrace to me to be thus vanquished, since he was not alone the foremost man of his time, but the best scholar the University had seen for a full century; and shall I add, as unpretending and as modest in the midst of all his triumphs as he was unapproachable by all competitors. And now, gentlemen, I will ask your leave to drink his health; doubtless it has been many a time toasted before over the same table, but none ever more ardently followed the sentiment with his whole heart than do I in proposing to you, 'Three cheers for Joe Nelligan.'"

The rambling opening of this brief speech was quite forgotten in the enthusiasm that greeted its close. In every respect it was a happy diversion. It relieved the company from a discussion that promised but gloomily. It brought back their minds to a pleasant theme, and enabled them, so to say, to pay off in grateful cheers to their host his own hospitable reception of them. As for Nelligan himself, he was sincerely, deeply affected; and, though he twice essayed to speak, he could get no further than "my son Joe"—"my boy"—and sat down murmuring—"Thank you—God bless you for it"—and covered his face with his hands.

Awkward as was the moment, it was relieved by the company filling their glasses and nodding in most friendly fashion to Massingbred as they drank his health; while a low murmur of approbation went round the table, of which he was most unmistakably the object.

"Are you fond of shooting, sir?" asked Brierley. "Well, then, I hope you'll not leave the country without giving me a day or two up at my little place in the mountains. There's some snipe left; and, upon my conscience, I'll be proud to see you at Kilmaccud."

"And there's worse quarters, too!" broke in Magennis. "My 'august leader' spent a day and a half there."

"I'll drive you over there myself," whispered Father Neal, "if you'll finish the week at the 'Rookery'—that's what they call the priest's house."

Massingbred accepted everything, and shook hands across the table in ratification of half a dozen engagements.

"You don't think I'll let you cheat me out of my guest so easily," said Nelligan. "No, gentlemen. This must be Mr. Massingbred's head-quarters as long as he stays here, for, faith, I'd not give him up to Mr. Martin himself."

"And who may he be?" asked Jack.

"Martin of Cro' Martin."

"The owner of half the county."

"Of the town you're in, this minute."

"The richest proprietor in the West."

Such were the pattering replies that poured in upon him, while words of intense astonishment at his ignorance were exchanged on all sides.

"I believe I have given you a fair guarantee for my ignorance, gentlemen," said Jack, "in confessing that I never so much as heard of Martin of Cro' Martin. Does he reside on his estate here?"

"Yes, sir," said Nelligan, "he lives at Cro' Martin Castle, about sixteen miles from this; and certainly, while in this part of the country, you ought to pay the place a visit. I have never been there myself, but I hear the most astonishing accounts of the splendour of the furniture and the magnificence of the whole establishment."

"There's pictures there," said the priest, "that cost the grandfather of the present man a quarter of a million sterling."

"Why, the three statues in the hall, they say, are worth ten thousand pounds," said Brierley.

"Be gorra! when a man would give four hundred for a bull, there's no saying what he'd stop at," broke in Peter Hayes. "I went up to see him myself, and indeed he's a beauty, there's no denying it — but four hundred pound! Think of four hundred pound!"

"The stable is the best thing in the place," said Father Neal; "they've mighty nice cattle there, for every kind of work."

"Thanks to his niece for that," cried Magennis; "she knows a horse with any man in the West of Ireland."

"And can break him, too," chimed in Brierley, "I don't care what his temper is. Let Miss Mary get her hand on him, and he'll turn out well."

"I'm driving an old chesnut mare this minute that she trained," said the priest; "and though she hasn't a good leg amongst the four, and is touched in the wind, she's as neat a stepper, and as easy in the mouth as a five-year old."

"She's a fine young woman!" said old Hayes, drinking off his glass, as though toasting her to himself, "and not like any Martin ever I seen before."

"No pride about her!" said Brierley.

"I wouldn't exactly say that, Matthew," interposed Father Neal. "But her pride isn't the common kind."

"She's as proud as Lucifer!" broke in Nelligan, almost angrily. "Did you ever see her drive up to a shop-door in this town, and make the people come out to serve her, pointing with her whip to this, that, and t'other, and maybe giving a touch of the lash to the boy if he wouldn't be lively enough?"

"Well, I'd never call her proud," rejoined old Hayes, "after seeing her sitting in Catty Honan's cabin, and turning the bread on the griddle for her, when Catty was ill."

"Is she handsome?" asked Massingbred, who was rather interested by the very discrepancy in the estimate of the young lady.

"We can agree upon that, I believe, sir," said the priest; "there's no disputing about her beauty."

"I never saw her in a room," said Magennis; "but my 'august leader' thought her masculine."

"No, no," said Nelligan; "she's not. She has the Martin manner—overbearing and tyrannical—if you like; but she can be gentle enough with women and children."

"You have certainly given me a strong curiosity to see her, said Massingbred. "Does she always live here?"

"Always. I don't believe she was ever beyond the bounds of the county in her life!"

"And how does she pass her time?" asked he, with some astonishment.

"She manages the whole estate," said Nelligan; "her uncle's a conceited old fool, incapable of anything, and lets her do what she likes; and so she drains, and plants, and encloses, makes roads, bridges, and even harbours; has all the new-fangled inventions about farming, and, if what I hear be true, is spending more money on the property than the fee-simple is worth."

"Yes, sir," chimed in Magennis; "and she's trying hard to bring back the old feudal devotion to the Chief, which was the bane of Ireland. She wants the tenants to have no will of their own, but just to vote whatever the landlord tells them. She had the impudence to tell my 'august leader' that they had no need of him down there—that the county was too poor to waste its energies in factious squabbles."

"If she'd let the people alone about their religion, I'd think better of her," said Father Neal. "What does *she* know about controversial points and disputed dogmas?"

"Maybe you're wrong about that," broke in Peter Hayes. "She came to me the other day for ten shillings for a school, and she said, 'Come over, Mr. Hayes; come and tell me if there's anything you are dissatisfied with.'"

"And did you go?" asked the priest.

"Faix! I did not," said Peter, with a dry look. "I thought the visit might cost me ten shillings, and so I stayed at home."

The manner in which he uttered these words produced a hearty laugh, in which he himself most good-humouredly took part.

"Well, she's good to the poor, anyhow," said Brierley; "and it's a new thing for one of her name to be so!"

"All policy—all scheming!" said Magennis. "She sees how the family influence has declined, and is fast becoming obliterated in this country, by reason of their worthlessness, insolence, and neglect of the people; and she's just shrewd enough to see how far a little cajolery goes with poor Paddy; but, as my 'august leader' observed, it is not a frieze coat, nor a pair of brogues, that can compensate for the loss of that freedom, that is every man's birthright; and it is not by an ounce of tea, or a dose of physic, we'll ever see Ireland great, glorious, and free."

"'First gem of the earth, and first flower of the sea!'" exclaimed Hayes, with enthusiasm.

Nor in the moment was the blunder of his quotation noticed by any but Massingbred. "You are an admirer of Tommy Moore, I see, sir?" said he to the old man.

"I'm fond of 'The Meeting of the Waters,' sir," said Hayes, meekly, and like a man who was confessing to a weakness.

"And here's the man to sing it!" cried Brierley, clapping the priest familiarly on the shoulder; a proposal that was at once hailed with acclamation.

"'Tis many a long day I haven't sung a note," said Father Neal, modestly.

"Come—come, Father Neal; we'll not let you off that way. It's not under this roof that you can make such an excuse!"

"He'd rather give us something more to his own taste," said Brierley. "'To Ladies' eyes around, boys'—eh, Father Rafferty?"

"That's my favourite of all the songs he sings," broke in Magennis.

"Let it be, 'To Ladies' eyes!'" cried Massingbred; "and we'll drink 'Miss Martin's.' 'I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.'" And he sang the line with such a mellow cadence that the whole table cheered him.

To the priest's song, given with considerable taste, and no mean musical skill, there followed in due course others, not exactly so successful, by Brierley and Magennis, and, at last, by old Peter himself, who warbled out a wonderful ditty, in a tone so doleful that two of the company fell fast asleep under it, and Brierley's nerves were so affected, that, to support himself, he got most completely drunk, and in a very peremptory tone told the singer to desist!

"Don't you perceive," cried he, "that there's a stranger present—a young English cub—come down to laugh at us? Have you no discretion—have you no decency, Peter Hayes, but you must go on with your stupid old 'croniawn' about dimples and the devil knows what?"

"Another tumbler, Mr. Massingbred—one more?" said the host, with the air, however, of one who did not exact compliance.

"Not for the world," said Jack, rising from table. "Have I your permission to light a cigar?"

"To do just whatever you please," said Nelligan, rather astonished at the formal preparations for smoking he now perceived brought forth, and which at the time we tell of were not so popular as in our own day.

The priest alone accepted Massingbred's offer of a "weed;" and Nelligan, opening a door into an adjoining room where tea was laid, threw also wide a little sash-door that led into the garden, whose cool and fragrant air was perfectly delicious at the moment. Jack strolled down the steps and soon lost himself in the dark alleys, not sorry to be left alone with his own thoughts, after a scene in which his convivial powers had been taxed to no mean extent.

"A clever young fellow! There's stuff in him," said the priest, in a whisper to Nelligan.

"And no impudence about him," said Brierley; "he's just like one of ourselves."

"He has a wonderful opinion of Joe!" said Nelligan.

"He's the very man for my 'august leader,'" said Magennis. "I'd like to bring them together!"

"His father's a Treasury Lord," said Nelligan, swelling at the thought of his being the host of such company!

"And I'll tell you what, Dan Nelligan," said the priest, confidentially, "talents won't do everything, now-a-days, without high connections; mark my words, and see if that young man doesn't stand high, yet. He has just got every requirement of success. He has good family, good looks, good abilities, and"—here he dropped his voice still lower—"plenty of brass. Ay, Dan, if Joe could borrow a little of his friend's impudence, it would be telling him something."

Nelligan nodded assentingly; it was about the only quality in the world which he could have believed Joe stood in any need of getting a loan of.

"Joe beat him out of the field," said Dan, proudly. "He told me so himself this morning."

"No doubt; and he would again, where the contest was a college one; but 'Life,' my dear friend—life demands other gifts beside genius."

"Ganius!" broke in old Hayes, with an accent of the profoundest contempt—"Ganius! I never knew a 'Ganius' yet that wasn't the ruin of all belonging to him! And whenever I see a young fellow that knows no trade, nor has any livelihood—who's always borrowing, here, and begging, there—a torment to his family and a burden to his friends, I set him down at once for a 'Ganius.'"

"It's not *that* I was alluding to, Mr. Hayes," said the priest, in some irritation. "I spoke of real ability, sterling powers of mind and thought, and I hope that they are not to be despised."

"Like my 'august leader's!'" said Magennis, proudly.

"Ay, or like that young gentleman's there," said Father Neal, with the tone of a man pronouncing upon what he understood. "I watched him to-day at dinner, and I saw that every remark he made was shrewd and acute, and that whenever the subject was new to him, he fell into it as he went on talking, picking up his facts while he seemed to be discussing them! Take my word for it, gentlemen, he'll do!"

"He doesn't know much about flax, anyhow," muttered old Hayes.

"He took his punch like a man," said Brierley, bearing testimony on a point where his evidence was sure to have weight.

"He'll do!" said Father Neal once more, and still more authoritatively than before.

"Joe carried away every premium from him," said old Nelligan, with a degree of irritation that proclaimed how little he enjoyed the priest's eulogy of his guest.

"I know he did, sir; and no man has a higher respect for your son's great abilities than myself; but here's how it is, Mr. Nelligan"—and he drew himself up like a man about to deliver a profound opinion—"here's how it is. The mind that can master abstract science, is one thing; the faculties that can deal with fellow-mortals, is another. This world is not a University!"

"The Lord be praised for that same!" cried old Hayes, "or I'm afraid I'd fare badly in it."

"To unite both descriptions of talent," resumed the priest, oratorically, "is the gift of but few."

"My 'august leader' has them," broke in Magennis.

"Show me the man that can deal with men!" said Father Neal, dictatorially.

"Women is twice as hard to deal with!" cried old Hayes. "I'll back Nancy Drake against any man in the barony."

"Faith, and I remember her a pretty woman," said Brierley, who would gladly have enticed the conversation out of its graver character. "A prettier girl than Mary Martin herself!" continued the inexorable Brierley, for the company did not appear to approve of his diversion.

"We are now discussing politics—grave questions of state, sir," said Father Neal—"for we have come to times when even the most indifferent and insignificant amongst us cannot refrain feeling an interest in the progress of our country. And when I see a fine young man like that there, as one may say going a-begging for a party, I tell you that we are fools—worse than fools—if we don't secure him."

"Do you mean for the borough?" asked Nelligan.

"I do, sir;—I mean for the borough!"

"Not till we have consulted my 'august leader,' I hope," broke in Magennis.

"I'm for managing our own affairs ourselves," said the priest. "What we want is a man of our own; and if that young gentleman there will take the pledges we should propose, I don't know that we'd readily get the like of him."

The silence that now fell upon the party was ominous; it was plain that either the priest's proposition was not fully acquiesced in, or that the mode of announcing it was too abrupt. Perhaps this latter appeared the case to his own eyes, for he was the first to speak.

"Of course what I have said now is strictly among ourselves, and not to be mentioned outside of this room; for until my friend Dan Nelligan here consents to take the field against the Martin interest, there is no chance of opening the borough. Let him once agree to *that*, and the Member for Oughterard will be his own nominee."

"Do you really think so?" asked Nelligan, eagerly.

"I know it, sir—and every gentleman at this table knows it."

A strong chorus in assent murmured around the board.

"It would be a great struggle," muttered Nelligan.

"And a great victory!" said the priest.

"What a deal of money, too, it would cost!"

"You have the money, Dan Nelligan; and let me tell you one thing"—here he leaned over his chair and whispered some words in the other's ear.

Old Nelligan's face flushed as he listened, and his eyes sparkled with intense excitement.

"If I thought *that*—if I only thought that, Father Rafferty—I'd spend half my fortune on it to-morrow."

"It's as true as I'm a living man," said the priest, solemnly; and then with a motion of his hand gestured caution, for Massingbred was slowly ascending the steps, and about to enter the room.

With an instinctive readiness all his own, he saw in the embarrassed and conscious looks around that he had himself been the object of their discussion, and with the same shrewdness he detected their favourable feeling towards him.

"I have made them my own!" muttered he to himself.

"He'll do our work well!" said the priest in his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG NELLIGAN—AS INTERPRETED IN TWO WAYS.

"I RATHER like that young Nelligan," said Martin, the day after Joseph had made his first appearance at dinner. "He talks pleasantly, and nothing of a pedant, as I half dreaded he might be."

"I thought his manner respectful, and very proper for his station," said Lady Dorothea, with an air of dignity.

"He spoke of politics, too, with less of prejudice, less of class bitterness, than I could have expected."

"Some policy, perhaps, in that," remarked her ladyship.

"Possibly!" said Martin, with a careless shrug of the shoulders.

"He was in a measure on his trial amongst us, and felt the importance of making a favourable first impression."

"It was more trouble than his father would have taken, then," said Martin, smiling. "Old Dan, as they call him, is not a very conciliating personage."

"I cannot imagine that the disposition of such a person is a matter of much moment; doesn't the man deal in tea, candles, and such like?"

"That he does, and in loans, and in mortgages too; not to add, that he exercises a very considerable share of influence in his town of Oughterard."

"A very shocking feature of the time we live in!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea.

"So it may be; but there it is—just like the wet weather, and the typhus, and the sheep-rot, and fifty other disagreeable things one can't help."

"But at least they can avoid recurring to them in conversation, sir. There is no necessity to open the window when the look-out is a dreary one."

Martin made no reply, and a pause of some moments ensued.

"What arrangement did you come to with him about his party in the borough?" said she at last.

"I didn't even allude to the topic," replied he, half testily. "These things are not to be done in that hasty fashion; they require management, discretion, and a fitting opportunity, too."

"Why, you talk of your grocer's boy as if he were a Cabinet Minister, Mr. Martin; you treat him like a great diplomatist!"

"It was not exactly on the first occasion of his being in my house, that I could have broached the matter."

"Which implies that you mean to invite him again."

"Possibly!" was the abrupt rejoinder.

"And must the odious attorney always be of the party?"

"No, madam, the odious attorney has set out for Dublin; but I shortly expect here one whom your ladyship will, doubtless, call an odious lawyer—though he happens to be one of the foremost men of the Irish bar."

"A class I detest," said her ladyship.

"He has one consolation, at least, madam," said Martin; "he figures in a pretty long category."

"And why should he not, sir? What have I ever met in the dreary eighteen years and seven months I have passed here, except unmitigated self-conceit, vulgarity, and presumption—the very type of all three being your Dublin barrister."

"Their countrymen certainly entertain another estimate of them," said Martin, laughing, for he had a lazy man's enjoyment of any passionate excitement of another's temper.

"And it was," resumed she, "in some sort, the contrast presented to such which pleased me in that young man's manner yesterday. Not but I feel assured that ere long you and Miss Martin will spoil him."

"I! aunt?" said Mary, looking up from her work; "how am I to exercise the evil influence you speak of?"

"By the notice—the interest you vouchsafe him, Miss Martin,—the most flattering compliment to one in his station."

"If he bears Collegiate honours so meekly, aunt," said Mary, quietly, "don't you think his head might sustain itself under *my* attentions?"

"Possibly so, young lady, if not accompanied by the accessories of your rank in life," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily; "and as to College honours," added she, after a pause, "they are like school distinctions, of no earthly value out of the class-room."

"Faith, I don't know that," said Martin. "At least, in my own experience, I can say, every fellow that has made a figure in life gave indications of high ability in his College years. I could go over the names of at least a dozen."

"Pray don't, sir—spare your memory, and spare us. Miss Martin and I will take it for granted that this young man is destined to be Lord Chancellor—Ambassador at St. Petersburg—or anything else you please. I have no doubt that the time is approaching when such things are very possible."

"It has come already, my lady," said Martin; and in the manner he uttered the words there was no saying whether the sentiment was pleasurable or the reverse.

"And yet I trust that there is a little interval still left to us ere that consummation," said she, with pretentious dignity. "Birth and blood have not lost all their *prestige!*"

"But they soon would," said Mary, "if they feared to enter the lists against those less well-born than themselves."

"Miss Martin!" exclaimed her ladyship, "what words are these?"

"I hope they are void of offence, aunt. Assuredly I never conceived that I could wound any susceptibilities here by saying that the well-born are ready to meet the plebeian on any ground."

"There is no necessity for such trials, Miss Martin; the position of each has been so accurately defined by—by—by providence," said she, at last, blushing slightly as she uttered the word, "that the contest is almost impossible."

"The French Revolution reveals another story, aunt, and tells us, besides, how inferior were the nobles of that country in the day of struggle."

"Upon my word, these are very pretty notions, young lady. Have they been derived from the intelligent columns of the *Galway Monitor*, or are they the teachings of the gifted Mr. Scanlan? Assuredly, Mr. Martin," said she, turning to him, "Papa was right, when he said that the Irish nature was essentially rebellious."

"Complimentary, certainly," said Martin, laughing.

"He founded the remark on history. Papa was uncommonly well read, and used to observe that there seemed something in the Celtic nature incompatible with that high-souled, chivalrous loyalty Englishmen exhibit."

"But how much of the Celt have Mary and myself got in us, if your observation is meant for us. Why, my lady, what with intermarriage centuries ago, and change of blood ever since, the distinctive element has been utterly lost."

"And yet we are not English, uncle," said Mary, with something that smacked of pride. "Confess it: we have our nationality, and that our people have traits of their own."

"That they have; but I never heard them made matter of boastfulness before," said Lady Dorothea, sneeringly.

"Well, aunt, it is not too late to hear it now; and I, for one, am proud of my country—not of its political station, for it is dependent—not of its wealth, for it is poor—but of its genial courtesy, its free-hearted hospitality, its manly patience under many a crushing calamity, and, not least of all, its gallantry on every field where England has won honour."

"I have read of all these things; but my own experiences are limited to the rags and restlessness of a semi-barbarous people. Nay, Miss Martin, I'm not going to discuss the matter. *I* have lived elsewhere—you have not. *I* have acquired habits—prejudices, perhaps you'd call them—in behalf of twenty things that Irish civilisation sees no need of."

"Would it not be kind, aunt, were you to aid us by the light of these same experiences?" said Mary, with an air of well-assumed humility.

"Certainly not, at the price of intercourse with the natives!" exclaimed her ladyship, haughtily. "I detest, on principle, the Lady Bountiful character. The whole of the hymn-book, castor-oil, and patent-barley sympathy, is shockingly vulgar. Like many things, well done at first, it fell into low hands, and got spoiled."

The tone of sarcasm in which this was spoken made Mary's cheeks crimson, and the flush spread itself over her neck. Still she made no reply, but, bending down her head, continued to work more assiduously.

"When are we to leave this place, Mr. Martin?" asked her ladyship, abruptly.

"I believe we are only waiting here till it be your pleasure to quit."

"And I dying to get away this fortnight past! Some one certainly told me that Cro' Martin was not ready for us. Was it *you*, Miss Martin?"

"No, aunt."

"It ran in my head it was you, then. Well, can we go at once—to-day—this afternoon?"

"To-morrow we might, perhaps," said Mary.

"Scarcely so," said Martin, interposing, "seeing that I have asked Repton to come down here and see the place."

"But you can drive him over from Cro' Martin. It would be intolerable, the idea of remaining here just for him. So we shall go to-morrow, Miss Martin." And with this, uttered in the tone of an order, her ladyship swept proudly out of the room, from which Martin, not over-anxious for a *tête-à-tête* with his niece, stepped noiselessly at the same moment by another door.

Scarcely had the door closed behind Lady Dorothea, when it was reopened to admit Joe Nelligan, who had met her ladyship in the corridor, and been received with such palpable coldness of manner, that he entered the room bashful and awkward, and hardly knowing whether to advance or retire.

"I fear I have made my visit at an untimely hour, Miss Martin," said he, blushing; "but the truth is, I know next to nothing of society and its habits, and if you would only be kind enough to tell me when I am a transgressor ——"

"The notion of learning from *me* is perfect," said Mary, interrupting him with a pleasant laugh. "Why, Mr. Nelligan, I never could be taught anything, even of the most ordinary rules of ceremonial life! though," added she, slily, "I have lived certainly in the midst of great opportunities."

"But, then, *I* have not," said Nelligan, gravely, and accepting the speech in all seriousness.

"Well, it comes pretty much to the same thing," said she, smiling, "since I have profited so little by them."

"I came thus early, however," said he, earnestly, "because I was impatient to correct an impression which might have remained from something that fell from me last night. You smile, I perceive," said he, "that I should attach so much importance to my own words!"

"It was not at that I smiled," said Mary, archly.

"No matter, continued he. "It is better, at the cost of a little wounded vanity, that I should escape a misconception. When your uncle spoke to me, last night, about the division of parties in the borough —— You are smiling again, Miss Martin!"

"Don't you perceive, sir, that what amuses me is the mistaken estimate you have formed of me, by addressing me on such topics?"

"But I came here expressly to speak to you," said he, with increased eagerness; "for I have always heard—always understood—that none ever took a deeper interest in all that regarded the country than yourself."

"If you mean, by the country, the lives and fortunes of those who live in it—the people by whose toil it is fertilised—by whose traits it is a nation—I tell you frankly that I yield to none for interest in all that touches them; but if you come to talk of privileges and legislative benefits, I know nothing of them; they form a land of whose very geography I am ignorant."

"But the subject is the same, and the mind which comprehends one, could embrace the other."

"In the one, however, I can labour usefully and fittingly, without much risk of mistake—never, indeed, of any mistake that might prove of serious moment. The other involves great questions, and has great hazards, perils, to affright stronger heads than mine!"

"There is much in what you say," said he, reflectingly.

"There is far more than I am able to express," said she, warmly. "Just remember, for a moment, that of all the laws you great and wise men are making, over which you rant and wrangle, and assail each other so vindictively, how few ever touch the interests or descend to the fortunes of those for whom you assume to make them—that the craftiest devices of your legislation never uproot an old prejudice, nor disturb an antiquated superstition; while I, and such as I—and there need be nothing more humble—can by a little timely help in trouble—a little care, or even a little counsel—comfort many a failing heart—cheer up many a sinking spirit—and, better still, do good service by teaching the poor man that he is of one family with those better off than himself, and that he is not an outcast because he is lowly!"

As Mary went on, her eyes shone more brilliantly, and her cheeks glowed, till Nelligan forgot even the words she spoke in admiration of the speaker.

"But here comes my uncle," cried she, hastily, "to rescue you from further amplification of the theme. Come in, uncle,"—for Martin was already about to retire—"it is Mr. Nelligan who wants to speak to you."

"Oh, I was in terror of a regular morning visitor!" said Martin, shaking the young man's hand cordially. "They didn't tell me you were here."

"I came, sir," said Joseph, hesitatingly, "to rectify what might, perhaps, require correction, in an observation I made last night. We were talking about the proper basis of a representation ——"

"My dear boy," broke in Martin, laughingly, "there's nothing kills me like asking me to go over the past, either in reading an old letter, or recalling an old conversation. And as to calling on me to justify something I once defended in argument, I'd give up the cause at once, and say I was all wrong, in preference."

"Then I need not fear you will hold me responsible ——"

"Not for anything, except your pledge to dine here to-morrow at seven."

Notwithstanding all the ease and frankness of Martin's manner—and as manner it was perfect—the young man felt far from satisfied. His want of breeding—that cruel want strong enough to mar the promise of high ability, and even impair the excellence of many a noble nature—seemed to hold him fast bound to the object of his visit. He had come for an explanation, and he couldn't go away without it. Mary read his difficulty at once, and as she passed him to leave the room, said, in a low voice, "To-morrow evening."

Nelligan started at the words, and his face became scarlet. What could she have meant? Was it that she wished him to come, and had thus condescended to remind him of his promise? or was it to suggest a more fitting moment to return to the late discussion?

"Are you coming to luncheon, Nelligan?" said Martin, rising.

"No, sir; not to-day. I have a call—a visit—some miles off." And while he was yet stammering out his excuses, Martin waved a familiar good-by with his hand, and passed into the adjoining room.

"And what can this mean?" said Nelligan to himself. "Is this the cordial treatment of an intimate, or is it contemptuous indifference for an inferior?" And, far more puzzled than he should have been with the knottiest problem of the "Principia," he quitted the house and strolled homewards.

He was led along the shore, and consequently in front of that straggling row of cottages which formed the village. It chanced to be the last day of the month, and, by the decree of the almanack, the close of the bathing season. The scene then going forward was one of unusual and not unpicturesque confusion. It was a general break-up of the encampment, and all were preparing to depart to their homes, inland. Had young

Nelligan been—what he was not—anything of a humorist, he might have been amused at the variety of equipage and costume around him. Conveyances the most cumbrous and most rickety, drawn by farm horses, or even donkeys, stopped the way before each door, all in process of loading by a strangely attired assemblage, whose Welsh wigs, flannel dressing-gowns, and woollen nightcaps, showed how, by a common consent, all had agreed to merge personal vanity in the emergency of the moment. The innumerable little concealments which had sheltered many a narrow household, the various little stratagems that had eked out many a scanty wardrobe, were now abandoned with a noble sincerity; and had there been a cork leg or a glass eye in the company, it would not have shrunk from the gaze of that open-hearted community.

Such of the travellers as had taken their places were already surrounded with the strangest medley of household gods it is possible to conceive. Like trophies, birdcages, candlesticks, spits, cullenders, fenders, and bread-baskets bristled around them, making one marvel how they ever got in, or, still more, how they were ever to get out again; the croaking of invalids, with crying children, barking terriers, and scolding owners, making a suitable chorus to the confusion.

Still, amidst all the discomforts of the moment, amidst the last wranglings with landlords, and the last squabbles over broken furniture and missing movables, it must be owned that the prevailing temper of the scene was good-humour and jollity. The Irish temperament seems ever to discover something congenial in those incidents of confusion and bustle which to other people are seasons of unmitigated misery; and even out of its own sources of discomfiture can derive matter for that quaint humour with which it can always regard life. In this wise was it that few now dwelt much upon their own inconveniences, so long as they were free to laugh at those of their neighbours.

Before he was well aware of it, young Nelligan found himself in the very midst of this gathering, whose mirthful accents suddenly subsided at his approach, and an air of constraint and reserve seemed to take their place. Never very quick to appreciate such indications, he drew nigh to a very lofty "conveniency," in which, with an air of stately dignity, Mrs. Cronan sat enthroned on a backgammon-table, with a portentous-looking cap-case in her lap.

"My mother will be sorry not to have seen you before you went away, Mrs. Cronan," said he to that lady, whose demure and frigid demeanour made the speech sound like a bold one.

"I'd have left my card and my compliments, sir, if I wasn't so pressed for time," responded she, with a haughty gravity.

"With P. P. C. on the corner," said the Captain from his pony-gig alongside; "which means, pour prendre 'congo,' or 'congee,' I never knew which."

"She'll be very lonely now, for the few days we remain," resumed Joe, conscious of some awkwardness, without knowing where or how.

"Not with the society of your distinguished acquaintances at 'the Nest,' sir!" the sarcastic import of which reply was more in the manner than the mere words; while the old Captain murmured:

"Begad, she gave it to him there—a regular double-headed shot!"

"We hope to follow you by the end of the week," said Nelligan, trying to seem at ease.

"If you can tear yourselves away, I suppose," said Miss Busk, through a double veil of blue gauze, for that lady's auburn ringlets reposed at the moment in the small mahogany casket beside her.

"There is not much attraction in the spot just now," said Joseph, smiling.

"Not for the like of us, perhaps, sir," retorted Mrs. Cronan—"not for persons in our station; but your fashionable people, I believe, always prefer a place when the vulgar company have left it."

"Good again—grape and canister!" chuckled out the Captain, who seemed to derive a high enjoyment from the scene.

"Would you move a little to one side, Mr. Nelligan?" said the Doctor; "my pony won't stand."

"Oh, he's mettlesome," said Joe, good-humouredly, as he stepped out of the way.

"That he is, sir, though he never was leader in a four-in-hand; but, you see, poor creatures of quadrupeds forget themselves down here, just like their betters!"

And the success of this sally was acknowledged by a general laugh from the company. The tone of the speakers, even more than their words, convinced Joseph that, from some cause or other, he was the object of their sarcasms; and although slow to take offence—even to the verge of what many might have called an unfeeling indifference—he felt their treatment most acutely. It was, then, in something like a haughty defiance that he wished them a careless good-by, and continued his way.

"The world seems bent on puzzling me this morning," muttered he, as he sauntered slowly on. "People treat me as though I were playing some deep game to their detriment—I, who have no game—almost no future!" added he, despondingly. "For what avails it to attain eminence amidst such as these; and, as for the others, I was not born for them."

To these moody thoughts succeeded others still gloomier. It had only been within a short time back that the young man had begun to appreciate the difficulties of a position to which his early successes imparted increasing embarrassment; and darkly brooding over these things, he drew near his mother's cottage. She was already at the door to meet him, with a letter in her hand.

"This is from your father, Joe," said she. "He wants you in all haste up at the town; and I've packed your clothes, and sent off Patsey for Mooney's car; so come in and eat something at once."

Joseph took the note from her hand, and perused it in silence. It was brief, and ran thus:

"DEAR JOE,—I want you up here, as soon as possible, to meet a friend whom you'll be surprised to see. I say no more, but that I expect you by dinner-time.—Yours ever,

"D. N."

"What does that mean, Joe?" asked his mother.

He only shrugged his shoulders in reply.

"And who can it be?" said she, again.

"Some of the townspeople, of course," said he, carelessly.

"No, no, Joe; it must be a stranger. Maybe it's Morgan Drake; his aunt expected him back from Jamaica before Christmas. Or it's Corny Dwyer's come home from Africa; you know he went on the deploring expedition ——"

"Exploring! mother; exploring!"

"Well, exploring, or deploring—it's all the same—he went four years ago, and all the tidings they've had of him was an elephant's tooth he sent home to his stepfather. I know it's Corny, for your father always liked him and the funny stories he told."

"Perhaps so!" replied Joe.

"I wonder, is he grown any bigger? he was little better than a dwarf when he went away, and the same age as yourself No, indeed, he was older—fourteen months older. It was Catty Henderson was running in my head. Isn't she a fine young woman, Joe?"

"Remarkably so," said he, with more animation in his tone.

"A little bit too haughty-looking and proud, maybe, considering her station in life, and that she has to go to service ——"

"Go to service, mother?"

"To be sure she has. If they can't get her a place as a governess or a companion, she'll have to take what she can get. Her father's married again, my dear Joe; and when men do that!" And here Mrs. Nelligan uplifted her hands and eyes most expressively. "Ay, indeed," continued she, with a heavy sigh, "and if it was once, it was fifty times, Catty's poor mother said to me, 'Sarah,' says she—she never called me Sally, but always Sarah—'Sarah,' says she, 'I've but one comfort, and that is, that Catty will never want a mother while you live. You'll be the same to her as myself—just as fond, and just as forgiving;' them was her very words!"

"And I hope you have never forgotten them, mother?" said Joe, with emotion.

"Don't you see I haven't; an't I repeating them to you this minute?"

"Yes; but I mean the spirit and the meaning of them," rejoined he, "and that you feel the obligation they've laid upon you."

"To be sure I feel it; don't I fret over it every time I'm alone? for I can't get it out of my head that maybe she'd appear to me ——"

"Who?—Catty?"

"No, but her mother. Oh, it's nothing to laugh at, Joe. There was Eliza Keane came back every Easter Monday, for two-and-twenty years, to search for a gravy spoon. Well, if it's laughing you are, I won't say any more; but here's the car now, and it's late enough we'll be on the road!"

"I'm not thinking of going, mother. I never meant to go," said Joe, resolutely.

"Never meant to go, after your father's note to you, Joe?" cried she, in half horror. "Surely it's all as one as ordering you up there."

"I know all that," said he, calmly; "but I see no reason why I should forego the pleasure of a party at the Martins' for the sake of meeting the convivial celebrities of Oughterard."

"But what will you say?"

"Say I'm engaged, have accepted another invitation; or, better still, leave you to make my excuses, mother. Come, come, don't look so terribly shocked and terrified; you know well enough that my father's four-year old mutton and his crusty port will compensate the company for heavier inflictions than my absence."

"They were always fond of you, Joe," said Mrs. Nelligan, half reproachfully.

"Nothing of the kind, mother; they never cared for me, nor was there any reason why they should. I'm sure I never cared for them. We endured one another, that was all."

"Oh, dear, but I'm glad your father is not listening to you," said she, with a stealthy glance around, as though not perfectly assured of secrecy. "So then, I suppose, there's nothing for it but to go up myself, and make the best of it; and sure it's all a lottery what temper he's in, and how he'll take it. I remember when they put the new duty on——what was it, Joe? I think it was hides ——"

"Not the least matter, mother; you've only to say that Mr. Martin has been kind enough to show me some attentions, and that I am silly enough—if you like to say so—to prefer them to the festive pleasures of Oughterard. In another week or so I shall have to go back to College. Let me, at least, enjoy the few days of my vacation in my own fashion."

Mrs. Nelligan shook her head mournfully over these signs of rebellion, and muttering many a gloomy foreboding, she went off to her room, to make her preparations for the journey.

CHAPTER XIV.

A VERY "CROSS EXAMINATION."

The morning was bright and sunny, the air, sharp, crisp, and bracing, as the heavy travelling-carriage, which conveyed Mr. Martin and Lady Dorothea, rolled smoothly along the trimly-kept approach to Cro' Martin. Many a beautiful glade—many a lovely vista opened on them as they passed along deep-bosomed woods and gently-swelling slopes, dotted over with cattle, stretched away on either side, while far in the distance could be seen the battlemented towers of the princely residence.

The lover of nature might have felt intense pleasure at a scene so abounding in objects of beauty. A painter would have lingered with delight over effects of light and shade, glorious displays of colour, and graceful groupings of rocks, and trees, and gnarled stumps. A proud man might have exulted in the selfish enjoyment of feeling that these were all his own, while a benevolent one would have revelled in the thought of all the channels through which such wealth might carry the blessings of aid and charity.

Which of these feelings predominated now in the minds of those who, snugly encased in furs, occupied the respective corners of the ample coach? Shall we own it?—not any of them. A dreamy, unremarking indifference was the sentiment of each; and they sat silently, gazing on a prospect which suggested nothing, nor awoke one passing emotion in their hearts. Had any one been there to express his admiration of the landscape, praised the trees, the cattle, or the grassy-slopes, Martin might have heard him with pleasure, and listened even with interest to his description. My Lady, too, might not unwillingly have lent an ear to some flattery of the splendid demesne of which she was mistress, and accepted, as half homage, the eulogy of what was hers. None such was, however, there; and so they journeyed along, as seemingly unconscious as though the scene were wrapt in midnight darkness.

Martin had known the spot, and every detail of it, from his boyhood. The timber, indeed, had greatly grown—graceful saplings had become stately trees, and feathery foliage deepened into leafy shade; but he himself had grown older too, and his sense of enjoyment, dulled and deadened with years, saw nothing in the scene to awaken pleasure. As for Lady Dorothea, she had reasoned herself into the notion that the walls of her own grounds were the boundaries of a prison, and had long convinced herself that she was a suffering martyr to some mysterious sense of duty. From the drowsy langour in which they reclined they were both aroused, as the pace of the carriage gradually diminished from a smooth brisk trot to an uneven jolting motion, the very reverse of agreeable.

"What have they done? Where are they going?" said Lady Dorothea, peevishly.

And Martin called out from the window, in tones even less gentle. "Oh! it's the new approach; the road is not quite completed," said he, half sulkily, as he resumed his place.

"Another of Miss Martin's clever devices, which, I must say I never concurred in."

"Why, you always professed to hate the old road by the stables."

"So I did; but I never agreed to passing round the back of the house, and thus destroying the privacy of the flower-garden—the only spot I may dare to call my own. Oh, dear! I shall be shaken to death. Have they broken the carriage? I'm certain they've smashed the spring at my side!"

Martin gave a cold, supercilious smile, the only reply to these words.

"They've only broken a trace, I perceive," said he, casting a hurried glance through the window, as the carriage came to a dead stop.

"You are equanimity itself, sir, this morning," said her ladyship, in a voice almost tremulous with anger. "I wonder if this admirable temper will befriend you when you shall see the cost of this precious piece of road-making?"

"It employs the people," said he, coolly.

"Employs the people! How I hate that cant phrase. Can't they employ themselves on their own farms? Haven't they digging and draining, and whatever it is, to do of their own?

Must they of necessity depend on us for support, and require that we should institute useless works to employ them?"

As if to offer a living commentary on her speech, a number of half-fed and less than half-clad men now drew near, and in accents of a most servile entreaty, begged to offer their services. Some, indeed, had already busied themselves to repair the broken harness, and others were levelling the road, carrying stones to fill up holes, and in every possible manner endeavouring to render assistance, but all were vociferous in asserting that the delay would not be above a minute or two—that the road was an elegant one, or would be soon—and that it was a "raal blessing" to see her ladyship and the master looking so well. In fact, they were thankful and hopeful together; and, notwithstanding the evidences of the deepest destitution in their appearance, they wore an air of easy, jaunty politeness, such as many a professional diner-out might have envied. Lady Dorothea was in no mood to appreciate such traits; indeed, if the truth must be told, they rather ruffled than soothed her. Martin saw nothing in them: he was too much accustomed to the people to be struck with any of their peculiarities, and so he lay back in silent apathy, and took no notice of them.

With all their alacrity and all their good-will—and there was no lack of either—there was yet such a total absence of all system and order, that their efforts were utterly useless. Some tugged away manfully to raise stones too heavy to lift; others came rudely in contact with fellows heavily laden, and upset them. The sturdy arms that spoked the hind wheels were resolutely antagonised by as vigorous struggles to move the fore ones. Every one shouted, cried, cursed, and laughed, by turns, and a more hopeless scene of confusion and uproar need not be conceived. Nor was Lady Dorothea herself an inactive spectator; for, with her head from the carriage-window, she directed a hundred impossible measures, and sat down at last, overcome with rage and mortification at their blunders.

The tumult was now at the highest, and the horses, terrified by the noise around them, had commenced plunging and rearing fearfully, when Mary Martin came galloping up to the spot at full speed.

"Let go that bridle, Hogan," cried she, aloud; "you are driving that horse mad. Loose the leaders' traces—unbuckle the reins, Patsey—the wheelers will stand quietly. There, lead them away. Speak to that mare, she's trembling with fear. I told you not to come by this road, Barney; and it was only by accident that I saw the wheel-tracks. A thousand pardons, aunt Dora, for this mishap. Barney misunderstood my orders. It will be all right in a moment. Once over this bad spot, the road is hard and level."

"Having no taste, nor any genius for adventures, Miss Martin," began her ladyship —— But Mary did not await the remainder of the speech, for, turning her horse sharply round, and beckoning to some of the people to follow her, she was away across the lawn at a smart canter. Having arrived at a small wooden bridge over a river, she ordered the men to lift some of the planking, by the aid of which they soon constructed a firm and safe passage for the carriage; and, as her presence was the signal for quiet obedience and prompt action, in less than ten minutes the difficulty was surmounted, the horses reharnessed, and all in readiness to proceed on their way.

Martin looked on in silent satisfaction, not offering a single suggestion, or even seeming to feel interested in the events, but enjoying, with all a lazy man's pleasure, the activity displayed around him. Not so Lady Dorothea. If she did not like "an adventure," she loved a "grievance." Whatever ministered to her selfishness, even in the remotest degree, was grateful to her. Mary's opportune arrival had now converted what might have passed for a calamity into a mere momentary inconvenience; and she could not conceal her discontent. "Your heroines are a perfect torment, at least to us souls of commoner clay. They live only for disasters."

"I must say that Mary extricated us from what might have become one," said Martin, drily.

"We are indebted to her, however, for the possibilty. This detestable road, which I promise you I'll never come again, is entirely her own invention. I hope, Miss Martin," added she, from the window, "that the other approach is to be kept in repair—at least for me." But Mary did not hear the appeal, for she was bandaging the arm of a poor country fellow, who had been sorely cut.

"There, drive on, Barney," cried Lady Dorothea. "I shall be taken ill if I stay here. Really, Mr. Martin, your niece's accomplishments are the least feminine one can conceive." And improving this theme, she continued the entire way till the carriage drew up at the door of the Castle.

"Yes, sir," said she, as she descended, "that heavy sigh shows you are indeed greatly to be pitied. No martyrdom ever exceeded yours. I am quite aware of all my imperfections, and can at least fancy everything you could say of me and my temper.—What did you say, Collins?" said she, addressing the obsequious-looking servant, who, with an air of gloomy joy, very respectful—but meant to mean more—had whispered something in her ear.

"A young lady, did you say, Collins?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Then you were very wrong, Collins. You meant to say a young person."

"Yes, my lady—a young person, like a lady."

"Not in the least, except to such appreciation as yours. Where is she?"

"In your ladyship's library."

"Did she come alone?"

"No, my lady. Mr. Henderson drove her over in his car, and said he'd pass this way again in the evening."

And now her ladyship swept proudly by, scarcely noticing the bowing servants who had formed into a line along the hall, and who endeavoured to throw into their sorrowful faces as much of joy as might consist with the very deepest humility. Nor was she more condescending to old Catty, who stood curtseying at the top of the stairs, with a basket of keys on her arm that might have served to lock up all Newgate.

"How cold every place feels! Collins, are you sure the rooms are properly aired?" cried she, shuddering. "But I suppose it's the climate. Have another stove put there," said she, pointing to an impossible locality.

"Yes, my lady," replied Collins.

"And warmer carpets on these passages."

"Yes, my lady; it shall be done to-morrow."

"No, sir; to-day."

"Yes, my lady; this afternoon."

"I don't remember if the windows are double along here."

"Yes, my lady, they are all double towards the north."

"Then they fit badly, for I feel the draft acutely here. It's like the keen air of a mountain;" and Collins gave a slight sympathetic shudder, and really looked cold. A somewhat haughty glance from her ladyship, however, as quickly reproved him, for Collins ought to have known that it was not by such as himself changes of temperature could be appreciable. And now she passed on and entered that part of the mansion peculiarly her own, and where, it must be owned, her spirit of fault-finding would have been at a loss what to condemn.

Lady Dorothea's library occupied an angle of the building, and from this circumstance, included within its precincts an octagonal tower, the view from which comprised every varied character of landscape. This favoured spot was fitted up in the most luxurious taste—with rarest gems of art, and cabinet pictures of almost fabulous value—to supply which foreign dealers and connoisseurs had been for years back in correspondence with her ladyship. Now, it was some rare treasure of carved ivory, or some sculptured cup of Benvenuto, that had been discovered accidentally, and which, despite the emulous zeal of Princes and Cardinals to obtain, was destined for herself. Now, it was some choice mosaic, of which but one other specimen existed, and that in the Pope's private collection at the Quirinal. Such was her ardour in this pursuit of excellence, that more than once had every object of this precious chamber been changed, to give place to something more costly, more precious, and rarer. For about two years back, however, the resources of the old world seemed to offer nothing worthy of attention, and the vases, the "statuettes," the bronzes, the pictures, and medallions had held their ground undisturbed.

Such was the sanctity of this spot, that, in showing the house to strangers, it was never opened, nor, without a special order from Lady Dorothea—a favour somewhat more difficult to obtain than a firman from the Sultan—could any one be admitted within its walls. The trusty servant in whose charge it was, was actually invested with a species of sacred character in the household, as one whose feet had passed the threshold of the tabernacle. Our reader may then picture to himself something of Lady Dorothea's varied sensations—for, indeed, they were most mingled—as she heard a slight cough from within the chamber, and, drawing nearer, perceived a female figure seated in front of one of the windows, calmly regarding the landscape.

With a degree of noise and bustle sufficient to announce her approach, Lady Dorothea entered the tower; while the stranger, rising, retired one step, and curtseyed very deeply. There was in all the humility of the obeisance a certain degree of graceful dignity that certainly struck her ladyship; and her haughty look, and haughtier tone, were some little modified, as she asked by what accident she found her there?

"My intrusion was a pure accident, my lady," replied the other, in a low, soft voice; "mistaking the door by which I had entered a room, I wandered on through one after another until I found myself here. I beg your ladyship to believe that nothing was further from my thoughts than to obtrude upon your privacy."

"Your name?" began her ladyship; and then, as suddenly correcting herself, she said, "You are Miss Henderson, I suppose?"

"Yes, my lady," she replied, with a slight bend of the head.

"I sent for you," said Lady Dorothea, in a half careless tone, while she turned over some books on the table, as if in search of something—"I sent for you, partly at the request of your mother ——"

"My stepmother, my lady," interposed the girl, calmly.

Lady Dorothea stared at her for a second or two, as though to say, how had she dared to correct her; but either that the reproof had not met its full success, or that she did not care to pursue it, she added: "At the request of your friends, and partly out of curiosity." And here Lady Dorothea raised her glass to her eye, and quietly surveyed her; an examination which, it must be owned, none could have borne with more unshaken fortitude, not the slightest tremor of a limb, not the faintest change of colour, betokening that the ordeal was a painful one.

"I do see that you have been educated in France," said her ladyship, with a smile of most supercilious import, while a curtsey from the young girl admitted the fact.

"Were you brought up in Paris?" asked she, after a pause.

"For four years, my lady."

"And the remainder of the time, where was it passed?"

"We travelled a great deal, my lady, in Germany and Italy."

"'We'—who were the 'we' you speak of? Please to bear in mind that I know nothing of your history."

"I forgot that, my lady. I thought my stepmother had, perhaps, informed your ladyship."

"Of nothing whatever, child," said she, haughtily, "save of your having a foreign education, and wishing, or hoping, to find some engagement as a governess or a teacher;" and the last words were drawled out languidly, as though they were suggestive of all that was wearisome and a bore. "So you must be good enough to explain who '*we*' were."

"The Duchesse de Luygnes and her family, my lady."

"You travelled with them—and in what capacity, pray?"

"I was called companion to the Princesse de Courcelles, the eldest daughter of the Duchess, my lady."

"Companion!—why, you must have been a mere child at the time?"

"A mere child, my lady; but they took me from the Pensionnat, to speak English with the young Princess."

"And then they took the charge of your education, I conclude?"

"Yes, my lady."

"And to what extent—or rather, in what direction; I mean, what object had they in view in choosing your studies?"

"They gave me the same Masters as to the young Princess, my lady; and I was instructed in all respects as she was."

"And treated like her also, I conclude?" said Lady Dorothea, with a sneering smile.

"Madame la Duchesse was ever most kind to me," said the girl, half proudly.

"Kind—yes, of course—kind, if you conducted yourself properly and to her satisfaction. A person of her condition would be kind; but I trust this did not proceed so far as to spoil you? I hope it never made you forget your station?"

"I trust it did not, my lady."

"With what part of the establishment did you live? Where did you dine?"

"With the Princess, my lady; except on *fete* days, when we were invited to the table of the Duchess."

"I never heard of anything more absurd—outrageously absurd. Why, are you aware, young woman, that these same friends of yours have done you irreparable mischief? They have, so to say, ruined your entire future, for how can I, and others in my station, avail myself of your services, with such habits and expectations as these?"

"Certainly not expectations, my lady. I never did or can expect such condescension from another."

"No matter; your head is filled with ideas unbefitting your condition, usages, habits, associations, all foreign to a menial station. You have been admitted to privileges, the want of which would be felt as hardships. In fact, as I said before, they have done you irreparable injury. You must feel it yourself."

A very faint smile, half in deprecation of the appeal, was the only reply of the young girl.

"You are certain to feel it later on in life, if you are not sensible of it at present, that I can vouch for, young woman," said Lady Dorothea, with all the firmness with which she could utter an unpleasant speech. "Nothing but unhappiness ever resulted from such ill-judged indulgence. Indeed, if your mother had mentioned the circumstance, I scarcely think I should have sent for you"—she paused to see if any strong signs of contrite sorrow displayed themselves in the young girl's features; none such were there, and Lady Dorothea more sternly added—"I may safely say, I never should have asked to see you."

When a speech meant to be severe has failed to inflict the pain it was intended to produce, it invariably recoils with redoubled power upon him who uttered it; and so Lady Dorothea now felt all the pang of her own ungenerous sentiment. With an effort to shake off this unpleasant sensation, she resumed:

"I might go further, and observe, that unless you yourself became thoroughly penetrated with the fact, you must always prove very unsuitable to the station you are destined to occupy in life. Do you understand me?"

"I believe I do, my lady," was the calm reply.

"And also," resumed she, still more dictatorially—"and also, that acquiring this knowledge by yourself will be less painful to your feelings than if impressed upon you by others. Do you fully apprehend me?"

"I think so, my lady."

Now, although the tone and manner of the young girl were unexceptionable in all that regards deference and respect, Lady Dorothea was not a little provoked at her unbroken composure. There was no confusion, not even a semblance of constraint about her. She replied to even sarcastic questions without the faintest shadow of irritation, and exhibited throughout the most perfect quietude and good breeding. Had the "young person" been overwhelmed with shame, or betrayed into any access of temper, her ladyship's manner would have presented a pattern of haughty dignity and gracefulness, and her rebukes would have been delivered in a tone of queen-like superiority; but Miss Henderson afforded no opportunity for these great qualities. She was deference itself: but deference so self-possessed, so assured of its own safeguard, as to be positively provoking.

"Under all these circumstances, therefore," resumed Lady Dorothea, as if having revolved mighty thoughts within her mind, "it appears to me you would not suit me."

But even this speech failed to call up one trait of dissappointment, and the young girl received it with only a deep curtsey.

"I'm sorry for it," continued my lady, "on your mother's account; your education has of course cost her and your father many sacrifices, which your duty requires you to repay." She paused, as if asking for some assent to this speech.

Another deep curtsey was the reply.

"There, that will do," said Lady Dorothea, angrily; for any attempt to provoke seemed an utter failure. I think I have nothing more to say. When I shall see your mother I can explain more fully to her. Good morning."

"I wish your ladyship good morning," said the girl, with a deep obeisance, and in a voice of perfect deference, while she retired towards the door. Before she had reached it, however, Lady Dorothea again addressed her:

"You forgot, I think, to tell me, why you left the Duchesse de Luygnes?"

"I left on the marriage of the Princess, my lady."

"Oh, I remember; she married a Russian, I think."

"No, my lady; she married the Duc de Mirecourt, French Ambassador at St. Petersburg."

"Ah, to be sure. I knew there was something Russian about it. And so they sent you away then?"

"The duchess most kindly invited me to accompany her, my lady, but my father desired I should return to Ireland."

"And very properly," said Lady Dorothea; "he took a most just view of the case; your position would only have exposed you to great perils. I'm sure you are not of my opinion, for, distrust of yourself does not appear one of your failings."—It is possible that this ungenerous remark was evoked by a very slight curl of the young girl's lip, and which, faint as it was, did not escape her ladyship's keen glances.—"Good morning."

Again had Miss Henderson gained the door; her hand was already on the lock, when her ladyship called out: "In the event of anything occurring to me likely to suit you, I ought to know what you can teach; and mind, don't bore me with a mere catalogue of hard names, but say what you really know."

"Some modern languages, my lady, with music."

"No Greek or Latin?" said Lady Dorothea, half sneeringly.

"Latin, perhaps; but though I can read some Greek, I could not venture to teach it."

"Nor Hebrew?"

"No, my lady."

"And the modern tongues—which of them do you profess to know?"

"French, Italian, Spanish, and German."

"And don't you draw?—they showed me what they called yours."

"Yes, my lady, but I cannot teach drawing."

"And of course you are thoroughly versed in history. Have you studied any scientific subjects?—mathematics, for instance."

"Only a few of the French initial books, my lady."

"Why, you are quite an Admirable Crichton for acquirement. I feel really abashed to find myself in such company." But even this coarse speech failed to irritate, and Lady Dorothea walked angrily towards the window and looked out.

It so chanced that, through an opening of the wood, she caught sight of a large assemblage of workpeople, who, headed by Miss Martin on horseback, were on their way to the quarries; and as she looked, a sudden thought flashed across her: "Why not retain the 'young person' as a companion for her niece? How admirably would all this girl's knowledge contrast with Mary's ignorance. What an unceasing source of disparagement would their contact afford at the very moment that the arrangement might seem dictated by the very best and highest of motives."

It may doubtless appear to many, that the individual who could reason thus, must be animated by a most corrupt and depraved nature, but unhappily the spiteful element in the human heart is one which never measures its modes of attack, but suffers itself to be led on, from acts of mere petty malice, to actions of downright baseness and badness. Lady Dorothea was not devoid of good traits, but once involved in a pursuit, she totally forgot the object which originally suggested it, but engaged all her zeal and all her ardour for success. She would have been shocked at the bare possibility of actually injuring her niece; she would have resented with indignation the mere mention of such; but yet she would have eagerly grasped at whatever afforded a chance of dominating over her. Mary's influence in the household—her rule over the peasantry of the estate—was a perpetual source of annoyance to her ladyship, and yet she never knew how to thwart it, till now that chance seemed to offer this means.

"You need not go back just yet: I'll speak to Mr. Martin about you," said she, turning towards Miss Henderson, and, with a respectful curtsey, the girl withdrew, leaving her ladyship to her own somewhat complicated reflections.

In less than half an hour after Lady Dorothea proceeded to Mr. Martin's study, where a cabinet council was held, the substance of which our reader can readily conceive; nor need he have any doubts as to the decision, when we say that Lady Dorothea retired to her own room with a look of satisfaction so palpably displayed, that Mademoiselle Hortense, her maid, remarked to herself, "Somebody or other was sure to pass a *mauvais quart d'heure* when *Miladi* goes to her room with an air of such triumphant meaning as that."

CHAPTER XIII.

"A HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM."

Cro' Martin was replete with every comfort and luxury. All its arrangements betokened wealth; not a single appliance of ease or enjoyment but was to be found within its well-ordered walls; and yet there was one want which seemed to mar all, and infuse a sense of almost dreary coldness over everything, and this was—the absence of a numerous family—the assemblage of various ages, which gives to a home its peculiar interest, embodying the hopes and fears, and passions and motives of manhood, in every stage of existence, making up that little world within doors which emblematises the great one without; but, with this singular advantage, of its being bound up in one holy sentiment of mutual love and affection.

This charm is it which gives the whole vitality to home—this mingling of the temperaments of youth, and manhood, and deep age, blending hopes of the future with memories of the past, and making of every heart a portion of one human biography, in which many are sharers. To the stranger, who came to see the house and its gorgeous decorations, all seemed suggestive of habitable enjoyment. The vast drawing-rooms appeared as if only waiting for a splendid company; the dark-wainscoted dining-room, with its noble fireplace of gigantic dimensions, looked the very scene where hospitable conviviality might be enacted; the library, calm, quiet, and secluded, seemed a spot wherein a student might have passed a lifelong. Even in the views, that presented themselves at the several windows, there was a certain appropriateness to the character of the room, and the same importunate question still arose to one's mind: Who is there to enjoy all this? What words of glad welcome echo through this vaulted hall—what happy daughter sings through these gilded chambers—where is the social pleasantry that circles the blazing fire of the ample hearth? Alas! all was sombre, splendid, and dreary. No, we are wrong!—not all! There was one corner of this great house where cheerfulness was the very type of comfort. It was a small, and not lofty room, whose two windows projected beyond the walls, giving a wide view over the swelling landscape for miles of space. Here the furniture was of the most ordinary kind, but scrupulously neat and well kept. The chairs—there were but four of them—all with arms and deep cushions; the walnut table a perfect mirror of polish; the cloth curtains, that closed the windows and concealed the door, massive and heavy-folded,—all breathed of snugness; while the screen that surrounded the fire had other perfections than those of comfortable seclusion, containing a most strange collection of the caricatures of the time, and the period before the Union. It is but necessary to add that this was Mrs. Broon's apartment—the snug chamber where old Catty enjoyed herself, after the fatigues and duties of the day. Here now she sat at tea, beside a cheerful fire, the hissing kettle on the hob harmonising pleasantly with the happy purring of an enormous cat, who sat winking at the blaze; and while evidently inconvenienced by the heat, lacking energy to retreat from it. Catty had just obtained the newspaper—as the master had gone to dinner—and was really about to enjoy a comfortable evening. Far from devoid of social qualities, or a liking for companionship, she still lived almost entirely to herself, the other servants being chiefly English, whose habits and ways were all strange to her, and all whose associations were widely different from her own. Catty Broon had thus obtained a reputation for unsociability which she by no means deserved, but to which, it must be owned, she was totally indifferent. In fact, if *they* deemed *her* morose and disagreeable; *she*, in turn, held *them* still more cheaply, calling them a set of lazy devils that "were only in each other's way," and "half of them not worth their salt."

Catty had also survived her generation; all her friends of former years had either died or emigrated, and except two or three of the farm-servants, none of the "ould stock," as she called them, were in existence. This brief explanation will show that Catty's comparative isolation was not entirely a matter of choice. If a sense of loneliness did now and then cross her mind, she never suffered it to dwell there, but chased away the unpleasant thought by some active duty; or if the season of that were over, by the amusing columns of the *Intelligence*—a journal which realised to Mrs. Broon's conceptions the very highest order of literary merit.

Catty did not take much interest in politics; she had a vague dreamy kind of notion that the game of party was a kind of disreputable gambling, and Parliament itself little better than a "Hell," frequented by very indifferent company. Indeed, she often said it would be "well for us if there was no politics, and maybe then, there would be no taxes either." The news she liked was the price of farming stock at fairs and markets. What Mr. Hynes got for his "top lot" of hoggets, and what Tom Healey paid for the "finest heifers ever seen on the fair-green." These, and the accidents—a deeply interesting column—were her peculiar tastes, and her memory was stored with every casualty, by sea, fire, and violence, that had graced the *Intelligence* for forty years back; in truth they formed the stations of her chronology, and she would refer to events as having occurred the same year that Joe Ryan was hanged, or "the very Christmas that Hogan fired at Captain Crossley." An inundation of great extent also figured in these memorabilia, and was constantly referred to, by her saying, "This or that happened the year after the Flood," suggesting a rather startling impression as to her longevity.

On the evening we now refer to, the newspaper was more than commonly adorned with these incidents. Public news having failed, private calamities were invoked to supply the place. Catty was, therefore, fortunate. There was something, too, not altogether unpleasant in the whistling storm that raged without, and the heavy plashing of the rain as it beat upon the window-panes. Without imputing to her, as would be most unjust, the slightest touch of ill-nature, she felt a heightened sense of her own snugness as she drew closer to the bright hearth, while she read of "a dreadful gale in the Bay of Biscay."

It was just in the most exciting portion of the description that her door was rudely opened, and the heavy curtain dashed aside with a daring hand; and Catty, startled by the sudden interruption, called angrily out:

"Who's there—who are ye, at all?"

"Can't you guess, Catty?" cried out a pleasant voice. "Don't you know that there's only one in this house here, who'd dare to enter in such a fashion?"

"Oh, Miss Mary, is it you? And, blessed Virgin, what a state ye're in," cried she, as she gazed at the young girl, who, throwing away her riding hat, wrung out the rain from her long and silky hair, while she laughed merrily at old Catty's dismayed countenance.

"Why, where in the world were you—what happened you, darling?" said Catty, as she assisted her to remove the dripping costume.

"I was at the Wood, Catty, and up to the quarries, and round by Cronebawn, and then, seeing a storm gathering, I thought I'd turn homeward, but one of Kit Sullivan's children—my little godchild, you know—detained me to hear him recite some verses he had learned for my birthday; and, what with one thing and another, it was pitch dark when I reached the 'New Cut,' and then, to my annoyance, I found the bridge had just been carried away—there, Catty, now for a pair of your own comfortable slippers—and, as I was saying to you, there was no bridge!"

"The bridge gone!" exclaimed Catty, in horror.

"All Tom Healey's fault. I told him that the arch had not span enough, and that the buttresses would never stand the first heavy fall of rain from the mountains, and there's not a vestige of them now!"

"And what did you do?"

"I rode for the Low Meadows, Catty, with all speed. I knew that the river, not being confined there between narrow banks, and spreading over a wide surface, couldn't be very deep. Nor was it. It never touched the girths but once, when we got into a hole! But she is such a rare good beast, that little Sorrel; she dashed through everything, and I don't think I took forty minutes from Kane's Mill to this door, though I never saw a spot of the road all the while, except when the lightning showed it. There now, like a good old dear, don't wring your hands and say, 'Blessed hour!' but just put some more tea in the teapot, and fetch me your brown loaf!"

"But surely you'll die of cold!—you'll be in a fever!"

"Nonsense, Catty; I have been out in rain before this. I'm more provoked about that bridge than all else. My excellent aunt will have such a laugh at my engineering skill, when she hears of it. Can't be helped, however. And so there's a dinner-party up stairs, I hear. Fanny told me there were three strangers."

"So I hear. There's a lawyer from Dublin; and a lady from

I don't know where; and young Nelligan, old Dan's son. I'm sure I never thought I'd see the day he'd be eating his dinner at Cro' Martin."

"And why not, Catty? What is there in his manners and conduct that should not make him good company for any one here?"

"Isn't he the son of a little huckster in Oughterard? Old Dan, that I remember without a shoe to his foot!"

"And is it a reproach to him that he has made a fortune by years of patient industry and toil?"

"In-dus-try! toil! indeed," said Catty, sneeringly. "How much in-dus-try or toil there is, weighing out snuff and sugar, in a snug shop. Ayeh! he's an old Niggar, the same Dan. I know him well."

"But that is no reason why you should disparage his son, Catty, who is a young gentleman of the highest ability and great promise. I never heard you speak so ungenerously before."

"Well, well, darling, don't look angry with your ould Catty, anyway. It isn't for the like of Dan Nelligan, or his son either, you'd be cross with *me!*"

"Never, Catty, never—for anybody or anything," said the young girl, taking her hand with both her own. "But you haven't told me who the lady is. How did she arrive, and when?"

"I know nothing of her. Peter came to say that the blue bedroom was wanting to-night, and he wished to tor-ment me into asking who for?—but I wouldn't, just for that same; and so I gave him the keys without a word."

"I wonder if this note, that I found on my dressing-table, will explain anything," said Mary, as she proceeded to break the seal. "Of all the absurd ways of my lady aunt, she has not a more ridiculous one than this trick of writing little notes, instead of speaking. She sees me every day, and might surely say whatever she wanted to say, without embalming it in a despatch. This, I perceive, is number four hundred and seventy-six, and I presume she's correct in the score. Only think, Catty—four hundred little epistles like this!"

And with these words she carelessly unfolded the letter and began to read it. All her indifference of manner, however, soon gave way to an expression of considerable eagerness, and she had no sooner finished the epistle than she recommenced and re-read it.

"You'd never guess what tidings this brings me, Catty," said she, laying down the paper, and looking with an expression half sad, half comical.

"Maybe I might then," said Catty, shaking her head knowingly.

"Come, out with your guess, then, old lady, and I promise to venerate your wisdom ever after if you be right—that is, if nobody has already given you a hint on the subject."

"Not one in the world," said Catty, solemnly; "I pledge you my word and faith I never heard a syllable about it."

"About it! about what?"

"About what's in the letter there," said Catty, stoutly.

"You are therefore quite certain that you know it," said Mary, smiling, "so now let's have your interpretation."

"It's a proposial," said Catty, with a slight wink.

"A what?"

"A proposial—of marriage, I mean."

But before the words were out, Mary burst into a fit of laughter, so hearty, and with such good-will, that poor Catty felt perfectly ashamed of herself.

"My dear Catty," said she, at length, "you must have been reading Fairy Tales this morning; nothing short of such bright literature could have filled your mind with these imaginings. The object of the note is, I assure you, of a quite different kind;" and here she ran her eye once more over the epistle. "Yes," continued she, "it is written in my dear aunt's own peculiar style, and begins with a 'declaratory clause,' as I think Mr. Scanlan would call it, expressive of my lamentably neglected education, and then proceeds to the appropriate remedy, by telling me that I am to have a Governess!"

"A what!" cried Catty, in angry amazement.

"A Governess, Catty—not a governor, as you suspected."

"Ayeh, ayeh!" cried the old woman, ringing her hands; "what's this for? Don't you know how to govern yourself by this time? And what can they teach you that you don't understand already?"

"Ah, my dear Catty," said the young girl, sadly, "it is a sad subject you would open there,—one that I have wept over many a dreary hour! No one knows—no one even could guess—how deeply I have deplored my illiterate condition. Nor was it," added she, ardently, "till I had fashioned out a kind of existence of my own—active, useful, and energetic—that I could bury the thought of my utter want of education. Not even you, Catty, could fathom all the tears this theme has cost me, nor with what a sinking of the heart I have thought over my actual unfitness for my station."

"Arrah, don't provoke me! don't drive me mad!" cried the old woman, in real anger. "There never was one yet as fit for the highest place as yourself; and it isn't me alone that says it, but hundreds of ——"

"Hundreds of dear, kind, loving hearts," broke in Mary, "that would measure my poor capacity by my will to serve them. But, no matter, Catty; I'll not try to undeceive them. They shall think of me with every help their own affection may lend them, and I will not love them less for the over-estimate."

As she spoke these words, she buried her face between her hands; but the quick heaving of her chest showed how deep was her emotion. The old woman respected her sorrow too deeply to interrupt her, and for several minutes not a word was spoken on either side. At last, Mary raised her head, and throwing back the long, loose hair, which in heavy masses shaded her face, said with a firm and resolute voice:

"I'd have courage to go to school to-morrow, Catty, and begin as a mere child to learn, if I knew that another was ready to take my place here. But who is to look after these poor people, who are accustomed now to see me amongst them, on the mountains, in the fields, at their firesides?—who gain new spirit for labour when I ride down in the midst of them, and look up, cheered, by seeing me, even from a sick-bed. Her ladyship would say, Mr. Henderson could do all this far better than myself."

"Mr. Henderson, indeed!" exclaimed Catty, indignantly; "the smooth-tongued old rogue!"

"And perhaps he might, in England," resumed Mary; "but not here, Catty—not here! We care less for benefits than the source from which they spring. We Irish cherish the love of motives as well as actions; and, above all, we cherish the links that bind the lowliest in the land with the highest, and make both better by the union."

She poured out these words with rapid impetuosity, rather talking to herself than addressing her companion: then, suddenly changing her tone, she added:

"Besides, Catty, *they* are used to *me*, and *I* to *them*. A new face and a new voice would not bring the same comfort to them."

"Never, never," muttered the old woman to herself

"And I'll not desert them."

"That you won't, darling," said the old woman, kissing her hand passionately, while tears swam in her eyes, and trickled down her cheeks.

"There is but one thought, Catty, that makes me at all faint-hearted about this, and whenever it crosses me I do feel very low and depressed." She paused, and then murmured the words, "My father!"

"Your father, my darling! What about *him?*"

"It is thinking, Catty, of his return; an event that ought to be—and would be, too—the very happiest of my life; a day, for whose coming I never sleep without a prayer; and yet, even this bright prospect has its dark side, when I recal all my own deficiences, and how different he will find his daughter from what he had expected her."

"May the blessed Saints grant me patience!" cried Catty, breaking in. "Isn't it too bad to hear you talking this way? Sure, don't I know Master Barry well? Didn't I nurse him; and wasn't I all as one as his own mother to him? and don't I know that you are his own born image? 'Tis himself and no other ye are every minute of the day."

"And even that, Catty," said Mary, smiling, "might fail to satisfy him. It is something very different indeed he might have imagined his daughter. I'm sure nobody can be more ignorant than I am, of what a person in my station ought to know. I cannot hide this from myself in my sad moments. I do not try to do so, but I have always relied upon the consolation that, to an existence such as mine is like to be, these deficiencies do not bring the same sense of shame, the same painful consciousness of inferiority, as if I were to mingle with the world of my equals. But if he were to come back—he, who has seen society in every shape and fashion—and find me the poor, unlettered, unread, untaught thing I am, unable to follow his very descriptions of far-away lands without confusion and mistake; unable to benefit by his reflections from very want of previous knowledge—oh, Catty, dearest, what a miserable thing is self-love after all, when it should thus thrust itself into the foreground, where very different affections alone should have the place."

"He'd love you like his own heart," said Catty. "Nobody knows him like me; and if there was ever one made for him to dote on, it's your own self."

"Do you indeed think so?" cried Mary, eagerly.

"Do I know it—could I swear it?" said Catty. "He was never much given to study himself, except it was books of travel like 'Robinson Crusoe,' and the like; and then, after reading one of them books he'd be off for days together, and we'd be looking for him over the whole country, and maybe find him in the middle of Kyle's Wood up a tree; or once, indeed, it was in the island of Lettermullen we got him. He built a mud-house, and was living there with a goat and two rabbits that he reared himself, and if he wasn't miserable when they brought him away home! I remember his words well—'Maybe,' says he, 'the time will come that I'll go where you can't come after me;' and ye see that's what he's done, for nobody knows where he wasn't wandering these last eight or nine years."

When Catty got upon this theme she could not be brought to quit it—nor, indeed, did Mary try—for though she had heard these stories of her father's boyish days over and over again, she never wearied of them; they had all the fascination of romance for her, with the stronger interest that grew out of her love for one who, she was told, had so loved herself. Besides this, she felt in her own heart the same promptings to a life of action and adventure. All the incidents and accidents of an eventful existence were the very things to delight her, and one of her happiest day-dreams was to fancy herself her father's companion in his wanderings by flood and field.

And thus they sat till a late hour of the night talking and listening, old Catty answering each inquiry of the young girl by some anecdote or trait of him she still persisted in calling "Master Barry," till, in the ardour of listening, Mary herself caught up the phrase, and so designated her own father.

"How unlike my uncle in everything!" exclaimed Mary, as she reflected over some traits the old woman had just recorded. "And were they not very fond of each other?"

"That they were: at least, I can answer for Master Barry's love; and to be sure, if having a reason was worth anything, your uncle ought to love him more than one man ever did another." Old Catty uttered these words with a slow and almost muttering accent; they seemed as if the expression of a thought delivered involuntarily—almost unconsciously.

Mary was attracted by the unwonted solemnity of her accent, but still more by an expression of intense meaning which gathered over the old woman's brows and forehead. "Ay, ay," muttered she still to herself, "there's few brothers would do it. Maybe there's not another living but himself would have done it."

"And what was it, Catty?" asked Mary, boldly.

"Eh!—what was I saying, darling?" said Catty, rousing herself to full consciousness.

"You were telling of my father, and some great proof of affection he gave my uncle."

"To be sure he did," said the old woman, hastily. "They were always fond of each other, as brothers ought to be."

"But this one particular instance of love—what was it, Catty?"

The old woman started, and looked eagerly around the room, as though to assure herself that they were alone; then, drawing her chair close to Mary's, she said, in a low voice, "Don't ask me any more about them things, darling. 'Tis past and gone many a year now, and I'd rather never think of it more, for I've a heavy heart after it."

"So, then, it is a secret, Catty?" said Mary, half proudly.

"A secret, indeed," said Catty, shaking her head mournfully.

"Then you need only to have said so, and I'd not have importuned you to tell it; for, to say truth, Catty, I never knew you had any secrets from *me*."

"Nor have I another, except this, darling," said Catty; and she buried her face within her hands. And now both sat in silence for some minutes—a most painful silence to each. At last Mary arose, and, although evidently trying to overcome it, a feeling of constraint was marked in her features.

"You'd never guess how late it is, Catty," said she, trying to change the current of her thoughts. "You'd not believe it is past three o'clock; how pleasantly we must have talked, to forget time in this way."

But the old woman made no reply, and it was clear that she had never heard the words, so deeply was she sunk in her own reflections.

"This poor hat of mine will scarcely do another day's service," said Mary, as she looked at it half laughingly. "Nor is my habit the fresher of its bath in the 'Red River;' and the worst of it is, Catty, I have overdrawn my quarter's allowance, and must live on, in rags, till Easter. I see, old lady, you have no sympathies to waste on me and my calamities this evening," added she, gaily, "and so I'll just go to bed and, if I can, dream pleasantly."

"Rags, indeed," said Catty. "It's well it becomes you to wear rags!" and her eyes sparkled with indignant passion. "Faith, if it comes to that"—here she suddenly paused, and a pale hue spread over her features like a qualm of faintish sickness—"may the Holy Mother give me help and advice, for sometimes I'm nigh forgetting myself!"

"My dear old Catty," said Mary, fondly, "don't fret about me and my foolish speech. I only said it in jest. I have everything—far more than I want—a thousand times more than I desire. And my excellent aunt never said a truer thing in her life, than when she declared that 'everybody spoilt me.' Now, good night." And kissing the old woman affectionately, Mary gathered up the stray fragments of her riding gear, and hurried away, her merry voice heard cheerfully as she wended her way up many a stair and gallery to her own chamber.

If Mary Martin's character had any one quality pre-eminently remarkable, it was the absence of everything like distrust and suspicion. Frankness and candour itself in all her dealings, she never condescended to impute secret motives to another; and the very thought of anything like mystery was absolutely repugnant to her nature. For the very first time in her life, then, she left old Catty Broon with a kind of uneasy, dissatisfied impression. There was a secret, and she was somehow or other concerned in it; so much was clear. How could she convince the old woman that no revelation, however disagreeable in itself, could be as torturing as a doubt? "Can there be anything in my position or circumstances here that I am not aware of? Is there a mystery about me in any way?" The very imagination of such a thing was agony. In vain she tried to chase away the unwelcome thought, by singing as she went, by thinking over plans for the morrow, by noting down, as she did each night, some stray records of the past day; still Catty's agitated face and strange emotion rose before her, and would not suffer her to be at rest.

To a day of great excitement and fatigue now succeeded a sleepless, feverish night, and morning broke on her unrefreshed, and even ill.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FINE OLD IRISH BARRISTER.

CAN any one tell us what has become of that **high conversational** power for which Ireland, but more especially Dublin, was once celebrated? Have the brilliant talkers of other days left no successors? Has that race of delightful convivialists gone and disappeared for ever? Or are we only enduring an interregnum of dulness, the fit repose, perhaps, after a period of such excitement? The altered circumstances of the country will doubtless account for much of this change. The presence of a Parliament in Ireland imparted a dignity and importance to society, while it secured to social intercourse the men who made that Senate illustrious. The Bar, too, of former days was essentially the career of the highest class, of those who had the ambition of political success, without the necessity of toiling for it through the laborious paths of the law, and thus the wit, the brilliancy, and the readiness which gives conversation its charm, obtained the high culture which comes of a learned profession, and the social intercourse with men of refined understanding.

With the Union this spirit died out. Some of the brightest and gayest retired from the world, sad, dispirited, and depressed; some felt that a new and very different career was to open before them, and addressed themselves to the task of conforming to new habits and acquiring new influences; and others, again, sought in the richer and greater country the rewards which they once were satisfied to reap in their own. With tho Union, society, in Dublin—using the word in its really comprehensive sense—ceased to exist. The great interests of a nation departed, men sank to the level of the small topics that engaged them, and gradually the smallest and narrowest views of mere local matters usurped the place of great events and liberal speculations. Towards the end of the first quarter of the present century, a few of those who had once made companionship with Curran, and Grattan, and Lysaght, and Parsons, were still in good health and vigour. A fine, high-hearted, manly class they were, full of that peculiar generosity of character which has ever marked the true Irish gentleman, and with a readiness in humour and a genial flow of pleasantry which rendered their society delightful.

Of this school—and probably the last, for he was then the Father of the Bar—was Valentine Repton, a man whose abilities might have won for him the very highest distinctions, but who, partly through indolence, and partly through a sturdy desire to be independent of all party, had all his life rejected every offer of advancement, and had seen his juniors pass on to the highest ranks of the profession, while he still wore his stuff-gown, and rose to address the Court from the outer benches.

He was reported in early life to have professed very democratic opinions, for which he more than once had incurred the deep displeasure of the authorities of the University. The principles of the French Revolution had, however, been gradually toned down in him by time, and probably by a very aristocratic contempt for the party who advocated them; so that soon after he entered on his career at the Bar he seemed to have abandoned politics, nor, except by a sly jest or an epigram upon a party leader, no matter of which side, did he ever advert to the contests of statecraft.

Though closely approaching seventy, he was hale and vigorous, his grey eyes quick and full of fire, his voice clear, and his whole air and bearing that of one many years younger. He had been a "Beau" in his youth, and there was in the accurately-powdered hair, the lace ruffles in which he still appeared at dinner, and the well-fitting silk stocking, an evidence that he had not forgotten the attractions of dress. At the Bar he still maintained the very highest place. His powers of cross-examination were very great; his management of a jury unrivalled. A lifelong acquaintance with Dublin had familiarised him with the tone and temper of every class of its citizens, and had taught him the precise kind of argument, and the exact nature of the appeal, to address to each. As he grew older, perhaps he did not observe all his wonted discretion in the use of this subtle power, and somewhat presumed upon his own skill. Nor was he so scrupulous in his deference to the Court—a feature which had once pre-eminently distinguished him—but upon the whole he had kept wonderfully clear of the proverbial irritability of age, and was, without an exception, the favourite amongst his brethren.

The only touch of years observable about his mind was a fondness for recurring to incidents or events in which he himself had borne a part. A case in which he held a brief—the dinner at which he had been brilliant—the epigram he had dashed off in Lady Somebody's drawing-room—were bright spots he could not refrain from adverting to; but, generally speaking, he had skill enough to introduce these without any seeming effort, or any straining, and thus, strangers, at least, were in wonderment at his endless stores of anecdote and illustration. No man better than he knew how to throw a great name into the course of a conversation, and make an audience for himself, by saying, "I remember one day at the Priory with Curran ——" or, "We were dining with poor Grattan at Tinnehinch, when ——" "As Flood once remarked to me ——" and so on.

The flattery of being addressed by one who had stood in such intimate relation to those illustrious men never failed of success. The most thoughtless and giddy hearers were at once arrested by such an opening, and Repton was sure of listeners in every company.

The man who finds his place in every society is unquestionably a clever man. The aptitude to chime in with the tone of others infers a high order of humour—of humour in its real sense—meaning thereby the faculty of appreciating, and even cultivating, the individual peculiarities of those around him, and deriving from their display a high order of pleasure.

From these scattered traits let my reader conjure up Valentine Repton before him, and imagine the bustling, active, and brisk-looking old gentleman, whose fidgetiness nearly drove Martin mad, as they held converse together in the library after breakfast. Now seated, now, rising to pace the room, or drawing nigh the window to curse the peltering rain without, Repton seemed the incarnation of uneasiness.

"Very splendid—very grand—very sumptuous—no doubt," said he, ranging his eyes over the gorgeous decorations of the spacious apartment, "but would kill me in a month; what am I saying?—in a week!"

"What would kill you, Repton?" said Martin, languidly.

"This life of yours, Martin—this sombre quiet—this unbroken stillness—this grave-like monotony. Why, man, where's your neighbourhood—where are your gentry friends?"

"Cosby Blake, of Swainestown, is abroad," said Martin, with an indolent drawl. "Randal Burke seldom comes down here now. Rickman, I believe, is in the Fleet. They were the nearest to us!"

"What a country! and you are spending——What did you tell me last night—was it upwards of ten thousand a year, here?"

"What with planting, draining, bridging, reclaiming waste lands, and other improvements, the wages of last year alone exceeded seven thousand!"

"By Jove! its nigh incredible," said the lawyer, energetically. "My dear Martin, can't you perceive that all this is sheer waste—so much good money actually thrown into Lough Corrib? Tell me, frankly, how long have you been pursuing this system of improvement?"

"About three years; under Mary's management."

"And the results—what of them?"

"It is too early to speak of that; there's Kyle's Wood, for instance—we have enclosed that at considerable cost. Of course we can't expect that the mere thinnings can repay us, the first year or two."

"And your reclaimed land—how has *it* prospered?"

"Not over well. They pushed draining so far, that they've left a large tract perfectly barren and unproductive."

"And the harbour—the pier I saw yesterday?"

"That's a bad business—its filling up the bay with sand! but we'll alter it in summer."

"And now for the people themselves—are they better off, better fed, clothed, housed, and looked after, than before?"

"Mary says so. She tells me that there is a wonderful change for the better in them."

"I don't believe a word of it, Martin—not a word of it. Ireland is not to be redeemed by her own gentry. The thing is sheer impossibility! They both know each other too well. Do you understand me? They are too ready to make allowances for short-comings that have their source in some national prejudice. Whereas your Saxon or your Scotchman would scout such a plea at once. Ireland wants an alternative, Martin—an alternative; and, amidst our other anomalies, not the least singular is the fact, that the Englishman, who knows nothing about us, nor ever will know anything, is precisely the man to better our condition."

"These are strange opinions to hear from your lips, Repton. I never heard any man so sarcastic as yourself on English ignorance regarding Ireland."

"And you may hear me again on the same theme whenever you vouchsafe me an audience," said the lawyer, sharply. "It was but the other day I gave our newly-arrived secretary, Mr. Muspratt, a gentle intimation of my sentiments on that score. We were dining at the Lodge. I sat next his Excellency, who, in the course of dinner, directed my attention to a very graphic picture the secretary was drawing of the misery he had witnessed that very day, coming up from Carlow. He did the thing well, I must own. He gave the famished looks, the rags, the wretchedness, all their due; and he mingled his pathos and indignation with all the skill of an artist; while he actually imparted a Raffaelle effect to his sketch, as he portrayed the halt, the maimed, the blind, and the palsied that crowded around the carriage as he changed horses, exclaiming, by way of peroration, 'Misery and destitution like this no man ever witnessed before, all real and unfeigned as it was sure to be.'

"'Naas is a miserable place, indeed,' said I, for he looked directly towards me for a confirmation of his narrative. 'There is no denying one word the gentleman has said. I came up that way from circuit three weeks ago, and was beset in the same spot, and in the same manner as we have just heard. I can't attempt such a description as Mr. Muspratt has given us, but I will say, that there was not a human deformity or defect that didn't appear to have its representative in that ragged gathering, all clamorous and eager for aid. I looked at them for a while in wonderment, and at last I threw out a "tenpenny" in the midst. The "blind" fellow saw it first, but the "lame cripple" had the foot of him, and got the money!'"

Repton leaned back in his chair, and laughed heartily as he finished. "I only wish you saw his face, Martin; and, indeed, his excellency's too. The aides-de-camp laughed; they were very young, and couldn't help it."

"He'll not make you a chief justice, Repton," said Martin, slily.

"I'll take care he don't," said the other. "*Summum jus summa injuria.* The chief justice is a great humbug, or a great abuse, whichever way you like to render it."

"And yet they'd be glad to promote you," said Martin, thoughtfully.

"To be sure they would, sir; delighted to place me where they had no fear of my indiscretions. But your judge should be ever a grave animal. The temptation to a joke should never sit on the ermine. As Flood once remarked to me of old Romney: 'A man, sir,' said he—and Flood had a semi-sarcastic solemnity always about him—'a man, sir, who has reversed the law of physics; for he rose by his gravity, and only fell by his lightness.' Very epigrammatic and sharp, that. Ah! Martin, they don't say these things now-a-days. By the way, who is the young fellow who dined with us yesterday?"

"His name is Nelligan; the son of one of our Oughterard neighbours."

"Pleasing manners, gentle, too, and observant," said Repton, with the tone of one delivering a judgment to be recorded.

"He's more than that," said Martin; "he is the great prize man of the year in Trinity. You must have surely heard of his name up in town."

"I think somebody did speak of him to me—recommend him, in some shape or other," said Repton, abstractedly—"these things are so easily forgotten; for, to say the truth, I hold very cheaply all intellectual efforts accomplished by great preparation. The cramming, the grinding, the plodding, the artificial memory work, and the rest of it, detract terribly, in my estimation, from the glory of success. Give me your man of impromptu readiness, never unprepared, never at a loss. The very consciousness of power is double power." And as he spoke he drew himself up, threw his head back, and stared steadfastly at Martin, as though to say: "Such is he who now stands before you."

Martin was amused at the display of vanity, and had there been another there to have participated in the enjoyment, would have willingly encouraged him to continue the theme; but he was alone, and let it pass.

"I'll make a note of that young man. Mulligan, isn't it?"

"Nelligan."

"To be sure. I'll remember poor Curran's epigram:

Oh, pity poor Tom Nelligan!
    Who walking down Pall Mall,
        He slipt his foot,
        And down he fell,
And fears he won't get well again.

Glorious fellow, sir; the greatest of all the convivialists of his time was Curran. A host in himself; but, as he once said, you couldn't always depend on the 'elevation.'"

Martin smiled faintly; he relished the lawyer's talk, but he felt that it demanded an amount of attention on his part that wearied him. Anything that cost him trouble was more or less of a "bore," and he already began to wish for his accustomed ease and indolence.

"Well, Repton," said he, "you wished to see the quarries, I think?"

"To see everything and everybody, sir, and with my own eyes, too. As Lysaght said, when I read the book of nature, 'I let no man note my brief for me.'"

"I thought of being your companion, myself; but somehow, this morning, my old enemy, the gout, is busy again; however, you'll not regret the exchange, Repton, when I give you in charge to my niece. She'll be but too happy to do the honours of our poor country to so distinguished a visitor."

"And a very artful plan to put me in good humour with everything," said Repton, laughing. "Well, I consent. I offer myself a willing victim to any amount of seduction. How are we to go?—do we drive, walk, or ride?"

"If Mary be consulted, she'll say ride," said Martin; "but perhaps ——"

"I'm for the saddle, too," broke in Repton. "Give me something active and lively, light of mouth and well up before, and I'll show you, as Tom Parsons said, that we can cut as good a figure at the wall as the 'Bar.'"

"I'll go and consult my niece, then," said Martin, hastening out of the room, to conceal the smile which the old man's vanity had just provoked.

Mary was dressed in her riding-habit, and about to leave her room as her uncle entered it.

"I have just come in the nick of time, Molly, I see," cried he. "I want you to lionise an old friend of mine, who has the ambition to 'do' Connemara under your guidance."

"What a provoke," said Mary, half aloud. "Could he not wait for another day, uncle? I have to go over to Glencalgher and Kilduff; besides, there's that bridge to be looked after, and they've just come to tell me that the floods have carried away the strong paling around the larch copse. Really, this old gentleman must wait." It was a rare thing for Mary Martin to display anything either of impatience or opposition to her uncle. Her affection for him was so blended with respect, that she scarcely ever transgressed in this wise; but this morning she was ill and irritable—a restless, feverish night following on a day of great fatigue and as great excitement—and she was still suffering, and her nerves jarring when he met her.

"But I assure you, Molly, you'll be pleased with the companionship," began Martin.

"So I might at another time; but I'm out of sorts to-day, uncle. I'm cross and ill-tempered, and I'll have it out on Mr. Henderson—that precious specimen of his class. Let Mr. Nelligan performe cicerone, or persuade my lady to drive him out; —do anything you like with him, except give him to *me*."

"And yet that is exactly what I have promised him. As for Nelligan, they are not suited to each other; so, come, be a good girl, and comply."

"If I must," said she, pettishly—"And how are we to go?"

"He proposes to ride, and bespeaks something lively for his own mount."

"Indeed! That sounds well!" cried she, with more animation. "There's 'Cropper' in great heart; he'll carry him to perfection. I'll have a ring-snaffle put on him, and my word for it but he'll have a pleasant ride."

"Take care, Molly—take care that he's not too fresh. Remember that Repton is some dozen years or more my senior."

"Let him keep him off the grass, and he'll go like a lamb. I'll not answer for him on the sward, though; but I'll look to him, uncle, and bring him back safe and sound." And so saying, Mary bounded away down the stairs and away to the stables, forgetting everything of her late discontent, and only eager on the plan before her.

Martin was very far from satisfied about the arrangement for his friend's equitation; nor did the aspect of Repton himself, as attired for the road, allay that sense of alarm—the old lawyer's costume being a correct copy of the coloured prints of those worthies who figured in the early years of George the Third's reign—a grey cloth spencer being drawn over his coat, fur-collared and cuffed, high riding-boots of black polished leather, reaching above the knee, and large gauntlets of bright-yellow doeskin, completing an equipment which Martin had seen nothing resembling for forty rears back.

"A perfect cavalier, Repton!" exclaimed he, smiling.

"We once could do a little that way," said the other, with a touch of vanity. "In our early days, Martin, hunting was essentially a gentleman's pastime. The meet was not disfigured by aspiring linendrapers or ambitious hardwaremen, and the tone of the field was the tone of society; but, nous avons changé tout cela. Sporting men, as they call themselves, have descended to the groom vocabulary, and the groom morals, and we, of the old school, should only be laughed at for the pedantry of good manners, and good English, did we venture amongst them."

"My niece will put a different estimate on your companionship; and here she comes. Molly, my old and valued friend Mr. Repton."

"I kiss your hand, Miss Martin," said he, accompanying the speech by the act, with all the grace of a courtier. "It's worth while being an old fellow, to be able to claim these antiquated privileges."

There was something in the jaunty air and well-assumed gallantry of the old lawyer which at once pleased Mary, who accepted his courtesy with a gracious smile. She had been picturing to herself a very different kind of companion, and was well satisfied with the reality.

"I proposed to young Mr. Nelligan to join us," said Repton, as he conducted her to the door; "but it seems he is too deeply intent upon some question, or point of law, or history, I forget which, whereupon we differed last night, and has gone into the library to search for the solution of it. As for me, Miss Martin, I am too young for such dry labours; or, as the Duc de Nevers said, when somebody rebuked him for dancing at seventy, 'Only think what a short time is left me for folly.'"

We do not propose to chronicle the subjects or the sayings by which the old lawyer beguiled the way; enough if we say that Mary was actually delighted with his companionship. The racy admixture of humour, and strong common sense, acute views of life, flavoured with, now, a witty remark, now, a pertinent anecdote, were conversational powers totally new to her Nor was he less charmed with her. Independently of all the pleasure it gave him to find one who heard him with such true enjoyment, and relished all his varied powers of amusing, he was equally struck with the high-spirited enthusiasm and generous ardour of the young girl. She spoke of the people and the country with all the devotion of one who loved both; and if at times with more of hopefulness than he himself could feel, the sanguine forecast but lent another charm to her fascination.

He listened with astonishment as she explained to him the different works then in progress—the vast plans for drainage—the great enclosures for planting—the roads projected, here, the bridges, there. At one place were strings of carts, conveying limestone for admixture with the colder soil of low grounds; at another they met asses, loaded with seaweed for the potato land. There was movement and occupation on every side. In the deep valleys, on the mountains, in the clefts of the rocky shore, in the dark marble quarries, hundreds of people were employed; and by these was Mary welcomed with eager enthusiasm the moment she appeared. One glance at their delighted features was sufficient to show that theirs was no counterfeit joy. Wherever she went the same reception awaited her; nor did she try to conceal the happiness it conferred.

"This is very wonderful, very strange, and very fascinating, Miss Martin," said Repton, as they moved slowly through a rocky path, escarped from the side of the mountain; "but, pardon me, if I venture to suggest one gloomy anticipation in the midst of such brightness. What is to become of all these people when *you* leave them—as leave them you will, and must, one day?"

"I never mean to do so," said Mary, resolutely.

"Stoutly spoken," said he, smiling; "but, unfortunately, he who hears it could be your grandfather. And again I ask, how is this good despotism to be carried on when the despot abdicates? Nay, nay; there never was a very beautiful girl yet, with every charm under heaven, who didn't swear she'd never marry; so let us take another alternative. Your uncle may go to live in London—abroad. He may sell Cro' Martin ——"

"Oh! that is impossible. He loves the old home of his family, and his name, too dearly; he would be incapable of such a treason to his house!"

"Now, remember, my dear young lady, you are speaking to the most suspectful, unimpulsive, and ungenerously-disposed of all natures, an old lawyer, who has witnessed so many events in life he would have once pronounced impossible—ay, just as roundly as you said the word yourself—and seen people and things, under aspects so totally the reverse of what he first knew them, that he has taught himself to believe that change is the law, and not permanence, in this life, and that you, and I, and all of us, ought ever to look forward to anything, everything, but the condition in which at present we find ourselves. Now, I don't want to discourage you with the noble career you have opened for yourself here; I am far more likely to be fascinated—I was going to say fall in love—with you for it, than to try and turn your thoughts elsewhere; but as to these people themselves, the experiment comes too late."

"Is it ever too late to repair a wrong, to assist destitution, relieve misery, and console misfortune?" broke in Mary, eagerly.

"It is too late to try the feudal system in the year of our Lord 1829, Miss Martin. We live in an age where everything is to be redressed by a Parliament. The old social compact between proprietor and peasant is repealed, and all must be done by "the House." Now, if your grandfather had pursued the path that you are doing to-day, this crisis might never have arrived; but he did not, young lady. He lived like a real gentleman; he hunted, and drank, and feasted, and rack-rented, and horsewhipped all around him; and what with duelling of a morning and drinking over-night, taught the people a code of morals that has assumed all the compactness of a system. Ay, I say it with grief, this is a land corrupted from the top, and every vice of its gentry has but filtered down to its populace! What was that I heard?—was it not a shot?" cried he, reining in his horse to listen.

"I thought so too; but it might be a blast, for we are not far from the quarries."

"And do you preserve the game, Miss Martin?—are you sworn foe to the poacher?"

"I do so; but in reality more for the sake of the people than the partridges. Your lounging country fellow, with a rusty gun and a starved lurcher, is but an embryo highwayman."

"So he is," cried Repton, delighted at the energy with which she spoke; "and I have always thought that the worst thing about the game-laws was the class of fellows we educate to break them. Poor old Cranbury wasn't of that opinion, though. You could never have seen him, Miss Martin; but he was a fine specimen of the Irish Bench in the old time. He was the readiest pistol in the Irish house; and, as they said then, he "shot up" into preferment. He always deemed an infraction of the game-laws as one of the gravest crimes in the statute. Juries, however, didn't concur with him, and, knowing the severity of the penalty, they invariably brought in a verdict of Not Guilty, rather than subject a poor wretch to transportation for a jack-snipe. I remember once—it was at Maryborough: the fellow in the dock was a notable poacher, and, worse still, the scene of his exploits was Cranbury's own estate. As usual, the jury listened apathetically to the evidence; they cared little for the case, and had predetermined the verdict. It was, however, so palpably proven, so self-evident that he was guilty, that they clubbed their heads together to concert a pretext for their decision. Cranbury saw the movement, and appreciated it, and, leaning his head down upon his hand, mumbled out, as if talking to himself, in broken sentences, 'A poor man—with a large family—great temptation—and, after all, a slight offence—a very slight offence.' The jury listened and took courage; they fancied some scruples were at work in the old judge's heart, and that they might venture on the truth, innocuously. 'Guilty, my lord,' said the foreman. 'Transportation for seven years!' cried the judge, with a look at the jury-box that there was no mistaking. They were 'done,' but there never was another conviction in that town afterwards."

"And were such things possible on the justice-seat?" exclaimed Mary, in horror.

"Ah! my dear young lady, I could tell you of far worse than that. There was a time in this country when the indictment against the prisoner was secondary in importance to his general character, his party, his connections, and fifty other things, which had no bearing upon criminality. There goes another shot! I'll swear to that," cried he, pulling up short and looking in the direction from which the report proceeded.

Mary turned at the same moment, and pointed with her whip towards a beech wood that skirted the foot of the mountain.

"Was it from that quarter the sound came?" said she.

The sharp crack of a fowling-piece, quickly followed by a second report, now decided the question; and, as if by mutual consent, they both wheeled their horses round, and set off at a brisk canter towards the wood.

"I have taken especial pains about preserving this part of the estate," said Mary, as they rode along. "It was my cousin Harry's favourite cover when he was last at home, and he left I can't say how many directions about it when quitting us, though, to say truth, I never deemed any precautions necessary till he spoke of it."

"So that poaching was unknown down here?"

"Almost completely so; now and then some idle fellow with a half-bred greyhound might run down a hare, or with a rusty firelock knock over a rabbit, but there it ended. And as we have no gentry neighbours to ask for leave, and the Oughterard folks would not venture on that liberty, I may safely say that the report of a gun is a rare event in these solitudes."

"Whoever he be, yonder, is not losing time," said Repton;—"there was another shot."

Their pace had now become a smart half-gallop, Mary, a little in advance, leading the way, and pointing out the safe ground to her companion. As they drew nigh the wood, however, she slackened speed till he came up, and then said:

"As I know everybody hereabouts, it will be enough if I only see the offender, and how to do that is the question."

"I am at your orders," said Repton, raising his whip to a salute.

"It will be somewhat difficult." said Mary, pondering; "the wood is so overgrown with low copse that one can't ride through it, except along certain alleys. Now we might canter there for hours and see nothing. I have it," cried she, suddenly, "you shall enter the wood and ride slowly along the green alley, yonder, till you come to the cross-road, when you'll turn off to the left, while I will remain in observation outside here, so that if our friend make his exit I am sure to overtake him. At all events, we shall meet again at the lower end of the road."

Repton made her repeat her directions, and then, touching his hat in respectful salutation, rode away to fulfil his mission. A low gate, merely fastened by a loop of iron without a padlock, admitted the lawyer within the precincts, in which he soon discovered that his pace must be a walk, so heavy was the deep clayey soil, littered with fallen leaves and rotting acorns. Great trees bent their massive limbs over his head, and, even leafless as they were, formed a darksome, gloomy aisle, the sides of which were closed in with the wild holly and the broom, and even the arbutus, all intermingled inextricably. There was something solemn even to sadness in the deep solitude, and so Repton seemed to feel as he rode slowly along, alone, tinging his thoughts of her he had just quitted with melancholy.

"What a girl, and what a life!" said he, musingly. "I must tell Martin that this will never do! What can all this devotion end in but disappointment. With the first gleam of their newly-acquired power the people will reject these benefits; they will despise the slow-won fruits of industry as the gambler rejects a life of toil. Then will come a reaction—a terrible reaction—with all the semblance of black ingratitude! She will herself be disgusted. The breach once made will grow wider and wider, and at last the demagogue will take the place of the landed proprietor. Estrangement at first, next distrust, and finally dislike, will separate the gentry from the peasantry, and then —— I tremble to think of what then!"

As Repton had uttered these words, the sharp bang of a gun startled him, and at the same instant a young fellow sprang from the copse in front of him into the alley. His coarse fustian shooting-jacket, low-crowned oil-skin hat, and leather gaiters, seemed to bespeak the professional poacher, and Repton dashed forward with his heavy riding-whip, upraised, towards him.

"Take care, old gentleman," said the young man, facing about; "my second barrel is loaded, and if you dare ——"

"By Heaven! I'll thrash you, you scoundrel!" said Repton, whose passion was now boiling over by a sudden bound of the cob, which had nearly thrown him from the saddle—a mischance greeted by a hearty burst of laughter from the stranger.

"I fancy you have quite enough to do at this moment!" cried he, still laughing.

Half mad with anger, Repton pressed his spurs to the cob's flanks, while he gave him a vigorous cut of the whip on the shoulder. The animal was little accustomed to such usage, and reared up wildly, and would inevitably have fallen back with his rider had not the stranger, springing forward, seized the bridle, and pulled him down by main force. Whether indifferent to his own safety, or so blinded by passion as not to recognise to what he owed it, the old man struck the other a heavy blow with his whip over the head, cutting through his hat, and covering his face with blood.

The young man passing his arm through the bridle, so as to render the other's escape impossible, coolly removed his hat and proceeded to stanch the bleeding with his handkerchief—not the slightest sign of excitement being displayed by him, nor any evidence of feeling that the event was other than a mere accident.

"Let loose my bridle-rein—let it loose, sir," said Repton, passionately—more passionately, perhaps, from observing the measured calmness of the other.

"When I know who you are, I shall," said the young man.

"My name is Valentine Repton; my address, if you want it, is Merrion-square North, Dublin; and can you now tell me where a magistrate's warrant will reach *you?*"

"My present residence is a house you may have seen on the side of the mountain as you came along, called, I think, Barnagheela; my name is Massingbred."

"You presume to be a gentleman, then?" said Repton.

"I have not heard the matter disputed before," said Jack, with an easy smile, while he leisurely bound the handkerchief round his head.

"And, of course, you look for satisfaction for this?"

"I trust that there can be no mistake upon that point, at least," replied he.

"And you shall have it, too; though, hang me, if I well know whether you should not receive it at the next assizes—but you shall have it. I'll go into Oughterard this day; I'll be there by nine o'clock, at the Martin Arms."

"That will do," said Massingbred, with a coolness almost like indifference; while he resumed his gun, which he had thrown down, and proceeded to load the second barrel.

"You are aware that you are poaching here?" said Repton—"that this is part of the Martin estate, and strictly preserved?"

"Indeed! and *I* thought it belonged to Magennis," said Jack, easily; but a preserve without a gamekeeper, or even a notice, is a blockade without a blockading squadron." And without a word more, or any notice of the other, Massingbred shouldered his gun and walked away.

It was some time before Repton could summon resolution to leave the spot, such was the conflict of thoughts that went on within him. Shame and sorrow were, indeed, uppermost in his mind, but still not unmingled with anger at the consummate ease and coolness of the other, who by this line of conduct seemed to assume a tone of superiority the most galling and insulting. In vain did he endeavour to justify his act to himself—in vain seek to find a plausible pretext for his anger. He could not, by all his ingenuity, do so, and he only grew more passionate at his own failure. "Another would hand him over to the next justice of the peace—would leave him to quarter sessions; but not so Val Repton"—"No, by Jove, he'll find a man to his humour there, if he wants fighting," said he aloud, as he turned his horse about and rode slowly back.

It was already dusk when he joined Miss Martin, who, uneasy at his prolonged absence, had entered the wood in search of him. It required all the practised dissimulation of the old lawyer to conceal the signs of his late adventure; nor indeed were his replies to her questions quite free from a certain amount of inconsistency. Mary, however, willingly changed the subject, and led him back to speak of topics more agreeable and congenial to him. Still he was not the same sprightly companion who had ridden beside her in the morning. He conversed with a degree of effort, and, when suffered, would relapse into long intervals of silence.

"Who inhabits that bleak-looking house yonder?" said he, suddenly.

"A certain Mr. Magennis, a neighbour, but not an acquaintance of ours."

"And how comes it that he lives in the very middle, as it were, of the estate?"

"An old lease, obtained I can't say how many centuries back, and which will expire in a year or two. He has already applied for a renewal of it."

"And, of course, unsuccessfully?"

"Up to this moment it is as you say, but I am endeavouring to persuade my uncle not to disturb him; nor would he, if Magennis would only be commonly prudent. You must know that this person is the leading Radical of our town of Oughterard, the man who sets himself most strenuously in opposition to our influence in the borough, and would uproot our power there, were he able."

"So far, then, he is a courageous fellow."

"Sometimes I take that view of his conduct, and at others I am disposed to regard him as one not unwilling to make terms with us."

"How subtle all these dealings can make a young lady!" said Repton, slily.

"Say, rather, what a strain upon one's acuteness it is to ride out with a great lawyer, one so trained to see spots in the sun, that he won't acknowledge its brightness if there be a speck to search for."

"And yet it's a great mistake to suppose that we are always looking on the dark side of human nature," said he, reflectively; "though," added he, after a pause, "it's very often our business to exaggerate baseness, and make the worst of a bad man."

"Even that may be more pardonable than to vilify a good one," said Mary.

"So it is, young lady; you are quite right there." He was thoughtful for a while, and then said—"It is very singular, but nevertheless true, that, in my profession, one loses sight of the individual, as such, and only regards him as a mere element of the case, plaintiff or defendant as he may be. I remember once, in a southern circuit, a hale, fine-looking young fellow entering my room to present me with a hare. He had walked twelve miles to offer it to me. 'Your honour doesn't remember me,' said he, sorrowfully, and evidently grieved at my forgetfulness. 'To be sure I do,' replied I, trying to recal his features; 'you are—let me see—you are—I have it—you are Jemmy Ryan.'

"'No, sir,' rejoined he, quickly, 'I'm the boy that murdered him!'

"Ay, Miss Martin, there's a leaf out of a lawyer's note-book, and yet I could tell you more good traits of men and women, more of patient martyrdom under wrong, more courageous suffering to do right, than if I were—what shall I say?—a chaplain in a nobleman's family."

Repton's memory was well stored with instances in question, and he beguiled the way by relating several, till they reached Cro' Martin.

"And there is another yet," added he, at the close, "more strongly illustrating what I have said than all these, but I cannot tell it to *you*."

"Why so?" asked she, eagerly.

"It is a family secret, Miss Martin, and one that in all likelihood you shall never know. Still, I cannot refrain from saying that you have in your own family as noble a specimen of self-sacrifice and denial as I ever heard of."

They were already at the door as he said this, and a troop of servants had assembled to receive them. Mary, therefore, had no time for further inquiry, had such an attempt been of any avail.

"There goes the first dinner-bell, Miss Martin," said Repton, gaily. "I'm resolved to be in the drawing-room before you!" And with this he hopped briskly up stairs, while Mary hastened to her room to dress.

CHAPTER XV.

"A RUINED FORTUNE."

No stronger contrast could be presented than that offered by the house which called Mr. Magennis master, to all the splendour and elegance which distinguished Cro' Martin. Built on the side of a bleak, barren mountain, without a trace of cultivation—not even a tree beside it—the coarse stone walls, high pitched roof, and narrow windows, seemed all devised in some spirit of derision towards its graceful neighbour. A low wall, coped with a formidable "frize" of broken bottles and crockery, enclosed a space in front once destined for a garden, but left in its original state of shingle, intermixed with the remnants of building materials and scaffold planks. A long shed, abutting on the house, sheltered a cow and a horse; the latter standing with his head above a rickety half door, and looking ruefully out at the dismal landscape beneath him.

Most of the window were broken—and in some no attempt at repair had been made—indicating that the rooms within were left unused. The hall-door stood ajar, but fastened by a strong iron chain; but the roof, more than all besides, bespoke decay and neglect, the rafters being in many places totally bare, while in others some rude attempts at tiling compensated for the want of the original slates. A strong colony of jackdaws had established themselves in one of the chimneys; but from another, in the centre of the building, a thick volume of dark-blue smoke rolled continually, conveying, indeed, the only sign of habitation about this dreary abode.

The inside of the house was, if possible, more cheerless than the out. Most of the rooms had never been finished, and still remained in their coarse brown plaster, and unprovided with grates or chimney-pieces. The parlour, *par excellence*, was a long, low-ceilinged chamber, with yellow-ochre walls, dimly lighted by two narrow windows; its furniture, a piece of ragged carpet beneath a rickety table of black mahogany, some half-dozen crazy chairs, and a small sideboard, surmounted by something that might mean buffet or bookcase, and now served for both, being indifferently garnished with glasses, decanters, and thumbed volumes, intermingled with salt-cellars, empty sauce-bottles, and a powder-flask.

An atrociously painted picture of an officer in scarlet uniform hung over the fireplace, surmounted by an infantry sword, suspended by a much-worn sash. These were the sole decorations of the room, to which even the great turf fire that blazed on the hearth could not impart a look of comfort.

It was now a little after nightfall; the shutters were closed, and two attenuated tallow candles dimly illuminated this dreary chamber. A patched and much-discoloured tablecloth, with some coarse knives and forks, bespoke preparation for a meal, and some half-dozen plates stood warming before the fire. But the room had no occupant; and, except for the beating of the shutters against the sash, as the wind whistled through the broken window, all was silent within it. Now and then a loud noise would resound through the house; doors would bang, and rafters rattle, as the hall-door would be partially opened to permit the head of a woman to peer out and listen if any one were coming; but a heavy sigh at each attempt showed that hope was still deferred, and the weary footfall of her steps, as she retired, betrayed disappointment. It was after one of these excursions that she sat down beside the kitchen fire, screening her face from the blaze with her apron, and then, in the subdued light, it might be seen that, although bearing many traces of sorrow and suffering, she was still young and handsome. Large masses of the silkiest brown hair, escaping from her cap, fell in heavy masses on her neck; her eyes were large and blue, and shaded by the longest lashes; her mouth, a little large, perhaps, was still beautifully formed, and her teeth were of surpassing whiteness. The expression of the whole face was of gentle simplicity and love—love in which timidity, however, deeply entered, and made the feeling one of acute suffering. In figure and dress she was exactly like any other peasant girl, a gaudy silk handkerchief on her neck being the only article of assumed luxury in her costume. She wore shoes, it is true—not altogether the custom of country girls—

but they were heavy and coarsely made, and imparted to her walk a hobbling motion that detracted from her appearance.

A large pot which hung suspended by a chain above the fire seemed to demand her especial care, and she more than once removed the wooden cover to inspect the contents; after which she invariably approached the window to listen, and then came back sorrowfully to her place, her lips muttering some low sounds inaudibly. Once she tried to hum a part of a song to try and beguile the time, but the effort was a failure, and, as her voice died away, two heavy tears stole slowly along her cheeks, and a deep sob burst from her; after which she threw her apron over her face, and buried her head in her lap. It was as she sat thus that a loud knocking shook the outer door, and the tones of a gruff voice rose even above the noise; but she heard neither. Again and again was the summons repeated, with the same result; and at last a handful of coarse gravel struck the kitchen window with a crash that effectually aroused her, and, springing up in terror, she hastened to the door.

In an instant she had unhooked the heavy chain, and sheltering the candle with her hand, admitted a large, powerfully-built man, who was scarcely within the hall, when he said, angrily, "Where the devil were you, that you couldn't hear me?"

"I was in the kitchen, Tom," said she.

"Don't call *me* Tom, d—n you:" replied he, violently. "Don't keep dinning into me the infernal fool that I've made of myself, or it will be the worse for you."

"Sure I never meant any harm by it; and it was your own self bid me do it," said she, meekly, as she assisted him to remove his dripping great-coat.

"And don't I rue it, well," rejoined he, through his half-closed teeth. "Isn't it this confounded folly that has shut me out of the best houses in the county! My bitter curse on the day and the hour I first saw you."

"Oh, don't say them words—don't, or you'll break my poor heart," cried she, clinging to him as he strode angrily into the parlour.

"Be off with you—be off to the kitchen, and leave me quiet," said he, rudely.

"There's your slippers, sir," said she, meekly, as, bending down, she untied his heavy shooting-shoes, and replaced them by a pair of list ones.

"Is the dinner ready?" asked he, sternly.

"It is, sir; but Massin'bred isn't come back."

"And who the devil is Massingbred? Don't you think he might be Mister Massingbred out of *your* mouth?"

"I ax your pardon, sir, and his too; but I didn't mean ——"

"There, there—away with you!" cried he, impatiently. "I'm never in a bad humour that you don't make me worse." And he leaned his face between his hands over the fire, while she slipped noiselessly from the room.

"Maybe he thinks he's doing me honour by staying here," burst he forth suddenly, as he sprung to his legs and stared angrily around him. "Maybe he supposes that it's great condescension for him to put up with my humble house! Ay, and that it's *my* bounden duty to wait for *him* to any hour he pleases. If I thought he did—if I was sure of it!" added he, with a deep guttural tone, while he struck his clenched fist violently against the chimney-piece. Then, seizing the large iron poker, he knocked loudly with it against the back of the fireplace—a summons quickly answered by the appearance of the girl at the door.

"Did he come in since morning?" asked he, abruptly.

"No, sir, never," replied she, with a half curtsey.

"Nor say what time he'd be back?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Then, maybe, he's not coming back—taken French leave, as they call it, eh, Joan?"

The sound of her name, spoken, too, in an accent of more friendly meaning, lighted up her face at once, and her large eyes swam in tears of gratitude towards him as she stood there.

"But he'd scarcely dare to do that!" said he, sternly.

"No, sir," said she, echoing half unconsciously his opinion.

"And what do *you* know about it?" said he, turning savagely on her. "Where were you born and bred, to say what any gentleman might do, at any time, or in any thing? Is it Joan Landy, the herd's daughter, is going to play fine lady upon us! Faix, we're come to a pretty pass now, in earnest. Be off with you. Away! Stop, what was that? Didn't you hear a shot?"

"I did, sir—quite near the house, too."

A sharp knocking now on the hall-door decided the question, and Magennis hastened to admit the arrival.

It is a strange fact, and one of which we are satisfied merely to make mention, without attempting in the least to explain.

but no sooner was Magennis in the presence of his young guest, than not only he seemed to forget all possible cause of irritation towards him, but to behave with a manner of, for him, the most courteous civility. He aided him to remove his shot-belt and his bag; took his hat from his hands, and carefully wiped it; placed a chair for him close to the fire; and then, as he turned to address him, remarked for the first time the blood-stained handkerchief which still bound his forehead.

"Did you fall—had you an accident?" asked he, eagerly.

"No," said the other, laughing; "a bit of an adventure only, which I'll tell you after dinner."

"Was it any of the people? Had you a fight ——"

"Come, Magennis, you must exercise a little patience. Not a word, not a syllable, till I have eaten something, for I am actually famishing."

A stout knock of the poker on the chimney summoned the dinner, and almost in the same instant the woman entered with a smoking dish of Irish stew.

"Mrs. Joan, you're an angel," said Massingbred; "if there was a dish I was longing for, on this cold, raw day, it was one of your glorious messes. They seem made for the climate, and, by Jove! the climate for them. I say, Mas, does it always rain in this fashion here?"

"No; it sleets now and then, and sometimes blows."

"I should think it does," said Jack, seating himself at the table. "The pleasant little slabs of marble one sees on the cabin-roofs to keep down the thatch, are signs of your western zephyrs.—Mrs. Joan has outdone herself to-day. This is first-rate."

"There's too strong a flavour of hare in it," said Magennis, critically.

"That's exactly its perfection; the wild savour lifts it out of the vulgar category of Irish stews, and assimilates it, but not too closely to the ragoût. I tell you, Mac, there's genius in the composition of that gravy."

The partial pedantry of this speech was more than compensated for by the racy enjoyment of the speaker, and Magennis was really gratified at the zest with which his young friend relished his meal.

"It has one perfection, at least," said he, modestly—"it's very unlike what you get at home."

"We have a goodish sort of a cook," said Jack, languidly—"a fellow my father picked up after the Congress of Verona.

Truffles and treaties seem to have some strong sympathetic attraction, and when diplomacy had finished its work, a *chef* was to be had cheap! The worst of the class is, they'll only functionate for your grand dinners, and they leave your every-day meal to some inferior in the department."

It was strange that Magennis could listen with interest always whenever Massingbred spoke of habits, people, and places, with which he had never been conversant. It was not so much for the topics themselves he cared—they were, in reality, valueless in his eyes—it was some singular pleasure he felt in thinking that the man who could so discuss them was his own guest, seated at his own table, thus connecting himself by some invisible link with the great ones of this world!

Massingbred's very name—the son of the celebrated Moore Massingbred—a Treasury Lord—Heaven knows what else besides—certainly a Right Honourable—was what first fascinated him in his young acquaintance, and induced him to invite him to his house. Jack would probably have declined the invitation, but it just came at the moment when he was deeply mortified at Nelligan's absence—an absence which old Dan was totally unable to explain or account for. Indeed, he had forgotten that, in his note to his son, he had not mentioned Massingbred by name, and thus was he left to all the embarrassment of an apology without the slightest clue as to the nature of the excuse.

No sooner, then, was it apparent to Massingbred that young Nelligan did not intend to return home, than he decided on taking his own departure. At first he determined on going back to Dublin. But suddenly a malicious thought sprung up of all the mortification it might occasion Joe to learn that he was still in the neighbourhood; and with the amiable anticipation of this vengeance, he at once accepted Magennis's offer to "accompany him to his place in the mountains and have some shooting."

It would not have been easy to find two men so essentially unlike in every respect as these two, who now sat discussing their punch after dinner. In birth, bringing-up, habits, instincts, they were widely dissimilar, and yet, somehow, they formed a sort of companionship palatable to each. Each had something to tell the other, which he had either not heard before, or not heard in the same way. We have already adverted to the strong fascination Magennis experienced in dwelling on the rank and social position of his young guest. Massingbred experienced no less delight in the indulgence of his favourite pastime—adventure hunting! Now, here was really something like adventure: this wild, rude mountain home—this strange compound of gloom and passion—this poor simple country girl, more than servant, less than wife—all separated from the remainder of the world by a gulf wider than mere space. These were all ingredients more than enough to suggest matter for imagination, and food for after-thought in many a day to come.

They had thus passed part of a week in company, when the incident occurred of which our last chapter makes mention, and an account of which, now, Massingbred proceeded to give his host, neither exaggerating nor diminishing in the slightest particular any portion of the event. He even repressed his habitual tendency to sarcasm, and spoke of his antagonist seriously and respectfully. "It was quite clear," said he, in conclusion, "that he didn't know I was a gentleman, and consequently never anticipated the consequence of a blow."

"And he struck you?" broke in Magennis, violently.

"You shall see for yourself," said Jack, smiling, as, untying the handkerchief, he exhibited a deep cut on his forehead, from which the blood still continued to ooze.

"Let Joan doctor you—she's wonderful at a cut. She has something they call Beggarman's Balsam. I'll fetch her. And without waiting for a reply he left the room. The young woman speedily after appeared with some lint and a small pot of ointment, proceeding to her office with all the quiet assiduity of a practised hand, and a gentleness that few "regulars" could vie with. Her skill was more than recompensed by the few muttered words of praise Magennis bestowed, as he grumbled out, half to himself, "Old Cahill himself couldn't do it better. I'd back her for a bandage against the College of Surgeons. Ain't ye easier now?—to be sure you are. She's good for *that*, if she is for nothing else!" And even this much of eulogy made her bosom heave proudly, and brought a flush of joy over her cheek that was ecstasy itself.

The world is not deficient in acts of kindness, benevolence, and good-will. There is a large fountain of these running in ten thousand rills; but how many more might there not be—how much of this wealth might there not be dispensed—and nobody living one jot the poorer! How many are there toiling away in obscurity and narrow fortune, to whom one single word of praise—one chance syllable of encouragement—would be life's blood! What sunken cheeks and lacklustre eyes would glow and gladden again by even a look of sympathy, withheld from no lack of kindliness, but mere want of thought! Oh ye, who have station, and fame, genius, or greatness, bethink ye that these gifts are never higher than when they elevate the humble and cheer the lowly, and there is no physician like him who animates the drooping heart, and gives new vigour to wearied faculties and failing energy. Joan was made happy by the two or three words of grateful thanks Massingbred addressed to her, and stole quietly away, leaving the two companions once more alone.

If there was any incident in life participation in which could convey intense gratification to Magennis, it was that sort of difference or misunderstanding that might lead to a duel. Whenever the affair offered no other alternative, his delight was unbounded. There were, it was rumoured, events in his own early life which would imply that the taste for mortal combat extended only to cases where his friends were concerned, and had no selfish application whatever. Of these we know nothing; nor, indeed, have we any information to convey regarding him, save by chance and stray words dropped by himself in the ungarded hours of after-dinner converse. There are, however, many who like the subordinate parts in this world's comedy—who would rather be best man than bridegroom, and infinitely prefer performing second, to principal.

We are not, however, going into the inquiry as to the cause; enough when we repeat that this was Magennis's great passion, and these were the kind of events for whose conduct and management he believed himself to possess the most consummate tact and ability.

"You're in luck, Massingbred," cried he, as the other concluded his recital—"you're in luck, sir, to have for your friend, one that, though I say it myself, hasn't his equal for a case like this in the three kingdoms. It was I, sir, took out Cahill when he shot Major Harris, of the Fusiliers. I handled him that morning in a way that made the English officers confess there was no chance against us! A duel seems an easy thing to arrange. You'd say that any fool could put up two men, twelve, or even ten, paces asunder, and tell them to blaze away; and if that was all there was in it, it would be simple enough; but consider for a minute the real case, and just remember how much the nature of the ground, whether level or uneven, has to do with it; what's behind, if a wall, or trees, or only sky; the state of the light; how the sun stands; whether there's wind, and what way it's coming. These are not all. There's the pistols—how they '*throw*,' and with what charge; and then there's the size of your man. Ay, Massingbred, and let me tell you, you now see before you the man that invented the 'invulnerable position."

"By Jove! that's a most valuable fact to me just now," said Jack, helping himself to a fresh tumbler. "I'm glad you have not been retained by the other side."

"The 'invulnerable position!'" continued Magennis, perfectly heedless of the other's remark; while, taking up the poker, he stalked out to the middle of the room, drawing himself up to his full height, and presenting, as though with a pistol—"Do you see what I mean?" cried he.

"I can't say I do," said Jack, hesitatingly.

"I thought not," rejoined the other, proudly, "nobody ever did that wasn't 'out' often. Pay attention now, and I'll explain it. My head, you perceive, is carried far behind my right shoulder, so as to be completely protected by my pistol-hand and the pistol. I say the pistol, because it has been proved scientifically that the steadiest eye that ever fired never could aim at the antagonist's pistol. Morris Crofton practised it for eight years in his own garden, and though he did succeed, he told me that for practical purposes it was no use. Now we come to the neck, and you may observe the bend of my elbow. Ay, that little angle that nobody would remark masks the jugular arteries, and all the other vital nerves in that part. John Toler used to say that the head and neck was like the metropolis, and that a shot elsewhere was only like a 'row' in the provinces: and a very true and wise remark it was. Not that I neglect the trunk," added he, proudly, "for you see how I stand—three-quarters of the back towards the enemy, so as not to expose the soft parts. As for the legs," cried he, contemptuously, "let them crack at them as long as they like."

"And that's the 'invulnerable position,'" said Massingbred; with less enthusiasm, however, than the discovery might seem to warrant.

"It is, sir, and if it wasn't for it there's many a strapping fellow walking about this day, that would be lying with a marble counterpane over him. Billy Welsh, that fought Brian of Deanstown, was the first man I ever 'put up' in it. Billy had a slight crick of the neck, and couldn't get the head far enough round to the right, and the ball took him in the bridge of the nose, and carried that feature clean off, but never damaged him in any other respect whatever!"

"I must say that the loss was quite sufficient for a man who had the benefit of the 'invulnerable position,'" said Massingbred, quietly.

"He thinks nothing of it. A chap in the Crow-street Theatre made him a better nose than ever he had, out of wax, I believe; and he has a winter one, with a blush of red on it, to make believe it was cold, and they tell me you'd never discover it wasn't his own."

Magennis had now resumed his place at table, and seemed bent on making up for lost time by giving double measure of whiskey to his punch.

"You say that he's to be in Oughterard to-night; well, with the blessing of the Virgin"—an invocation he invariably applied to every act of dubious morality—"we'll be with him before he's out of bed to-morrow!"

"I wish he had not given me a blow," said Jack, musingly. "He seemed such a stout-hearted, spirited old fellow, I'm really grieved to quarrel with him."

"I'm glad that there's nobody to hear them words but myself, Mr. Massingbred," said the other, with all the slowness and deliberation of incipient drunkenness—"I'm rejoiced, sir, that it's in the confidential intercourse of friendly—friendly—communication—that the son of my old and valued friend—Moore Massingbred—used expressions like that."

Jack started with amazement at this speech; he had not the slightest suspicion till that moment that Magennis and his father had ever known each other, or even met. A very little patience, however, on his part served to solve the difficulty, for he discovered that one of the peculiarities of this stage of his friend's ebriety was to fancy himself the intimate and associate of any one whose name he had ever heard mentioned.

"Ay, sir, them's words your father would never have uttered. I was with him in his first blaze. 'Moore,' says I, 'haven't you a pair of black breeches?'—he wore a pair of web 'tights' of a light pattern——What are you laughing at, sir?" cried he, sternly, and striking the table with his clenched knuckles, till the glasses all rang on it.

"I was laughing at my father's costume," said Jack; who really told the truth, such a portrait of his parent's appearance being manifestly unlike anything he had ever imagined.

"And the worse manners yours, sir," rejoined Magennis, rudely. "I'll not suffer any man to laugh at an old friend—and—and—schoolfellow!"

It was with the very greatest difficulty that Jack could restrain himself at this peroration, which indignation—the same, probably, that creates poets—had suggested. He had, however, tact enough to preserve his gravity, whilst he assured his companion that no unfilial sentiment had any share in his thoughts.

"So far, so well," said Magennis, who now helped himself to the whiskey, unadulterated by any water, "otherwise, sir, it's not Lieutenant Magennis, of the —9th Foot, would handle you on the ground to-morrow!"

"So, then, you've served, Mac? Why, you never broke that to me before!"

"Broke!" cried the other, with a voice shrill from passion, while he made an effort to rise from his chair, and sunk back again—"broke! who dares to say I was 'broke.' I left the scoundrels myself. I shook the dust off my feet after them. There never was a court-martial about it. Never—never!" To the deep crimson that suffused his face before, there now succeeded an almost death-like pallor, and Massingbred really felt terrified at the change. Some heartrending recollection seemed suddenly to have cleared his brain, routing in an instant all the effects of intoxication, and restoring him to sobriety and sorrow together.

"Ay," said he, in a low, broken voice, and still speaking to himself, "that finished me! I never held my head up again! Who could, after such a business? I came here, Mr. Massingbred," continued he, but addressing his guest in a tone of deep respect—"I came back here a ruined man, and not eight-and-twenty! You see me now, a dirty, drunken sot, not better dressed, nor better mannered, than the commonest fellow on the road, and yet I'm a gentleman born and bred, well nurtured, and well educated. I took a college degree, and went into the army." He paused, as if trying to gather courage to go on; the effort was more than he could accomplish, and, as the heavy tears stole slowly down his cheeks, the agony of the struggle might be detected. Half mechanically he seized the decanter of whisky and poured the tumbler nearly full; but Jack good-humouredly stretched out his hand towards the glass, and said, "Don't drink, Mac; there's no head could stand it."

"You think so, boy," cried he, with a saucy smile. "Little you know the way we live in the west, here;" and he tossed off the liquor before the other could stop him. The empty glass had scarcely been replaced on the table, when all the former signs of drunkenness had come back again, and in his bloodshot eyes and swollen veins might be seen the very type of passionate debauch.

"Not ask me to their houses!" cried he, hoarse with passion. "Who wants them? Not invite me! Did I ever seek them? The dirty, mean spalpeens, don't I know the history of every one of them? Couldn't I expose them from one end of the county to the other? Who's Blake of Harristown? He's the son of Lucky Magarry, the pedlar. You don't believe me. I had it from Father Cole himself. Lucky was hanged at Ennis. 'Ye want a confession!' says Lucky, when he came out on the drop—'ye want a confession! Well, I suppose there's no use in keeping anything back now, for ye'll hang me at any rate, and so here it's for you. It was *I* murdered Mr. Shea, and there was nobody helping me at all. I did it all myself with a flail; and be the same token, it's under Mark Bindon's tombstone this minute. There now, the jury may be azy in their minds, and the judge, and the hangman too, if he cares about it. As for his honour the high sheriff,' said he, raising his voice, 'he's a fine man, God bless him, and the county may be proud of him, for it was he ferreted out all about this business! And faix, notwithstanding all, I'm proud of him myself, for he's my own son!' And as he said that he dropped on his knees and cried out that he might never see glory if there was a word of lie in anything he said then! So that's what Blake got for his zeal for justice!"

And as Magennis finished, he burst into a wild, fiendish laugh, and said:

"There's the country gentry—there's the people won't know Magennis and his wife!—ay, sir, his lawful, married wife! Let me see that you or any other man will deny it, or refuse to treat her as becomes her station.—Joan! Joan!" shouted he, striking the poker violently against the chimney; and with hot haste and intense anxiety the poor girl rushed into the room the moment after. "Sit down here, ma'am," said Magennis, rising, and placing a chair for her beside his own, with an affectation of courtesy that savoured of mockery—"sit down, I say," cried he, stamping his foot passionately. "That's my wife, sir! No man that sits at *my* board shall behave to her as anything else."

"I have ever treated her with respect," said Massingbred, "and shall always continue to do so."

"And it's better for you to do so," said the other, fiercely, the bullying spirit rising on what he deemed the craven submission of his guest.

Meanwhile the girl sat trembling with terror, not knowing what the scene portended, or how it was to end.

"The herd's daughter, indeed! No, sir, Mrs. Magennis, of Barnagheela, that's her name and title!"

At these words the poor girl, overcome with joy and gratitude, fell down upon her knees before him, and, clasping his hand, covered it with kisses.

"Isn't that pretty breeding!" cried Magennis, violently. "Get up, ma'am, and sit on your chair like a lady. The devil a use in it, do what you will, say what you will—the bad 'drop' is in them; and whatever becomes of you in life, Massingbred, let me give you this advice—never marry beneath you!"

Jack contrived at this juncture to signal to the girl to step away, and by appearing to attend with eagerness to Magennis, he prevented his remarking her exit.

"A man's never really ruined till then," continued he, slowly, and evidently sobering again as he went on. "Friends fall away from you, and your companions are sure to be fellows with something against them! You begin by thinking you're doing a grand and a courageous thing! You string up your resolution to despise the world, and, take my word for it, the world pays you off at last. Ay," said he, after a long pause, in which his features settled down into an expression of deep sorrow, and his voice quivered with emotion—"ay, and I'll tell you something worse than all—you revenge all your disappointment on the poor girl that trusted you! and you break *her* heart to try and heal your own!"

With these last words he buried his head between his hands and sobbed fearfully.

"Leave me now—leave me alone," said he, without lifting his head. "Good night—good night to you!"

Massingbred arose without a word, and, taking a candle, ascended to his chamber, his last thoughts about his host being very unlike those with which he had first regarded him. From these considerations he turned to others more immediately concerning himself, nor could he conquer his misgivings that Magennis was a most unhappy selection for a friend in such an emergency.

"But then I really am without a choice," said he to himself.

"Joe Nelligan, perhaps, might —— but no, he would have been infinitely more unfit than the other. At all events, Nelligan has himself severed the friendship that once existed between us." And so he wandered on to thoughts of his former companionship with him. Regretful and gloomy enough were they, as are all memories of those in whose hearts we once believed we had a share, and from which we cannot reconcile ourselves to the exclusion.

"He had not the manliness to meet me when I had become aware of his real station! What a poor-spirited fellow! Just as if *I* cared what or who his father was. *My* theory is—Jack Massingbred can afford to know any man he pleases! Witness the roof that now shelters me, and the character of him who is my host!"

It was a philosophy he built much upon, for it was a form of self-love that simulated a good quality, many of his acquaintances saying, "At all events, there's no snobbery about Massingbred; he'll know, and even be intimate with, anybody." Nor did the deception only extend to others. Jack himself fancied he was an excellent fellow—frank, generous, and open-hearted.

It is a very strange fact—and fact it certainly is—that the men who reason most upon their own natures, look inwardly at their own minds, and scrutinise most their own motives, are frequently the least natural of all mankind! This self-inquiry is such thorough self-deception, that he who indulges in it, often becomes an actor. As for Massingbred, there was nothing real about him save his egotism! Gifted with very good abilities, aided by a strong "vitality," he had great versatility; but of all powers, this same plastic habit tends most to render a man artificial.

Now, his present difficulty was by no means to his taste. He did not like his "quarrel;" he liked less the age and station of his adversary; and, least of all, was he pleased with the character of his "friend." It was said of Sheridan, that when consulted about the music of his operas, he only asked, "Will it grind?"—that is, would it be popular enough for a street-organ, and become familiar to every ear? So Jack Massingbred regarded each event in life by the test of how it would "tell"—in what wise could a newspaper report it—and how would it read in the Clubs? He fancied himself discussing the adventure at "White's," and asking, "Can any one say what Massingbred's row was about? Was he poaching?—or how came he there?

Was there a woman in it? And who is his friend Magennis?" In thoughts like these he passed hour after hour, walking his room from end to end, and waiting for morning.

At length he bethought him how little likely it was that Magennis would remember anything whatever of the transaction, and that his late debauch might obliterate all memory of the affair. "What if this were to be the case, and that we were to arrive to late at Oughterard? A pretty version would the papers then publish to the world!" Of all possible casualties this was the very worst, and the more he reflected on it, the more probable did it seem. "He is the very fellow to wake up late in the afternoon, rub his eyes, and declare he had forgotten the whole thing."

"This will never do!" muttered he to himself; and at once determined that he would make an endeavour to recal his friend to consciousness, and come to some arrangement for the approaching meeting. Massingbred descended the stairs with noiseless steps, and gently approaching the door of the sitting-room, opened it.

Magennis was asleep, his head resting upon the table, and his heavy breathing denoting how deeply he slumbered. On a low stool at his feet sat Joan, pale and weary-looking, her cheeks still marked with recent tears, and the dark impression of what seemed to have been a blow beneath her eye. Jack approached her cautiously, and asked if it were his custom to pass the night thus?

"Sometimes, when he's tired—when he has anything on his mind," replied she, in some confusion, and averting her head so as to escape notice.

"And when he awakes," said Jack, "he will be quite refreshed, and his head all clear again?"

"By coorse he will!" said she, proudly. "No matter what he took of a night, nobody ever saw the signs of it on him, the next morning."

"I did not ask out of any impertinent curiosity," continued Massingbred, "but we have, both of us, some rather important business to-morrow in Oughterard—we ought to be there at an early hour ——"

"I know," said she, interrupting. "He bid me bring down these;" and she pointed to a case of pistols lying open beside her, and in cleaning which she had been at the moment engaged. "I brought the wrong ones, first." Here she stammered out something, and grew crimson over her whole face; then suddenly recovering herself, said, "I didn't know it was the 'Terries' he wanted."

"The 'Terries?'" repeated Jack.

"Yes, sir. It was these Terry Callaghan shot the two gentlemen with, the same morning, at Croghaglin—father and son they were!" And saying these words in a voice of the most perfect unconcern possible, she took up a flannel rag and began to polish the lock of one of the weapons.

"They're handsome pistols," said Jack, rather amused with her remark.

"They're good, and that's better!" replied she, gravely. "That one in your hand has seven double crosses on the stock and nine single."

"The seven were killed on the ground, I suppose?"

A short nod of assent was her reply.

"Such little events are not unfrequent down here, then?"

"Anan!" said she, not understanding his question.

Jack quickly perceived that he had not taken sufficient account of Joan's limited acquaintance with language, and said:

"They often fight in these parts?"

"Ayeh! not now," replied she, in a half-deploring tone. "My father remembers twenty duels for one that does be, now-a-days."

"A great change, indeed."

"Some say it's all for the better," resumed she, doubtfully. "But hush—he's stirring; leave him quiet, and I'll call you when he's ready."

"And I can depend ——"

"To be sure you can. He forgets many a thing, but no man living can say that he ever misremembered a duel." And with these words, in a low whisper, she motioned Massingbred to the door.

Jack obeyed in silence, and, ascending to his room, lay down on the bed. He determined to pass the interval before morning in deep thought and self-examination; but, somehow, he had scarcely laid his head on the pillow when he fell off into a heavy sleep, sound and dreamless.

The day was just breaking when he was aroused by a somewhat rude shake, and a voice saying:

"Come, up with you. We've a sharp ride before us!"

Jack started up, and in an instant recalled all the exigencies of the hour.

"I have sent 'the tools' forward by a safe hand," continued Magennis; "and Joan has a cup of tea ready for us, below stairs. So, lose no time now, and let us be off."

The humble meal that awaited them was soon despatched, and they were speedily mounted on the pair of mountain ponies Magennis had provided, and whose equipments, even in the half-light of the morning, rather shocked Massingbred's notions of propriety—one of his stirrup-leathers being a foot shorter than the other, while an old worsted bell-rope formed the snaffle-rein of his bridle.

The road, too, was rugged and precipitous, and many a stumble and scramble had they in the uncertain light; while the swooping rain dashed violently against them, and effectually precluded all thought of conversation. Two hours, that seemed like ten, brought them at length upon the high road; after which, by a brisk canter of forty minutes, they reached Oughterard.

"Let us dismount here," said Jack, as they gained the outskirts of the town, not fancying to make a public appearance on his humble steed.

"Why so?" answered Magennis. "It's ashamed of the pony you are! Oh, for the matter of that, don't distress yourself; we're too well used to them in these parts to think them ridiculous."

There was a soreness and irritation in his tone which Jack quickly remarked, and as quickly tried to obviate, by some good-natured remark about the good qualities of the animals; but Magennis heard him without attention, and seemed entirely immersed in his own thoughts.

"Turn in there, to your left," cried he, suddenly, and they wheeled into an arched gateway that opened upon the stable-yard of the inn. Early as it was, the place was full of bustle and movement, for it was the market-day, and the farmers were already arriving.

Carts, cars, gigs, and a dozen other nameless vehicles, crowded the spot, with kicking ponies and mules of malicious disposition; grooming, and shoeing, and unharnessing went on, with a noise and merriment that was perfectly deafening; and Massingbred, as he threaded his way through the crowd, soon perceived how little notice he was likely to attract in such an assembly. Magennis soon dismounted, and having given directions about the beasts, led Jack into the house, and up a narrow, creaking stair, into a small room, with a single window, and a bed in one corner. "This is where I always put up," said he, laying down his hat and whip, "and it will do well enough for the time we'll want it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A CHALLENGE."

"He's here; he arrived last night," said Magennis, as he entered the room after a short exploring tour through the stables, the kitchen, and every other quarter where intelligence might be come at. "He came alone; but the major of the detachment supped with him, and that looks like business!"

"The earlier you see him the better, then," said Massingbred.

"I'll just go and get my beard off," said he, passing his hand across a very grizzly stubble, "and I'll be with him in less than half an hour. There's only a point or two I want to be clear about. Before he struck you, did you gesticulate, or show any intention of using violence?"

"None. I have told you that I caught his horse by the bridle, but that was to save him from falling back."

"Ah, that was indiscreet, at all events."

"Wouldn't it have been worse to suffer him to incur a severe danger which I might have prevented?"

"I don't think so; but we'll not discuss the point now. There was a blow?"

"That there was," said Jack, pointing to the spot where a great strap of sticking-plaister extended across his forehead.

"And he seemed to understand at once that reparation was to be made for it?"

"The suggestion came from himself, frankly and speedily."

"Well, it's pretty evident we have to deal with a gentleman!" said Magennis, "and that same's a comfort; so I'll leave you now for a short time: amuse yourself as well as you can, but don't quit the room." And with this caution Magennis took his departure, and set off in search of Mr. Repton's chamber.

"Where are you bringing the mutton chops, Peter?" said he to a waiter, who, with a well-loaded tray of eatables, was hastening along the corridor.

"To the ould counsellor, from Dublin, sir. He's breakfastin' with the major."

"And that's his room, No. 19?"

"Yes, sir."

"They're merry, at all events," said Magennis, as a burst of hearty laughter was heard from within the chamber.

"'Tis just that they are, indeed," replied Peter. "The counsellor does be telling one story after another, till you'd think he'd no end of them. He began last night at supper, and I could scarce change the plates for laughin'."

Muttering some not very intelligible observation to himself, Magennis passed down the stairs, and issuing into the street, wended his way to the barber's.

If the Oughterard Figaro had not as brilliant a vocation as his colleague of Seville, his occupations were scarcely less multifarious, for he kept the post-office, was clerk at petty sessions, collected the parish cess, presided over "the pound," besides a vast number of inferior duties. Whether it was the result of a natural gift, or by the various information of his official life, Hosey Lynch was regarded in his native town as a remarkably shrewd man, and a good opinion on a number of subjects.

He was a short, decrepid old fellow, with an enormous head of curly black hair, which he seemed to cultivate with all the address of his craft; probably intending it as a kind of advertisement of his skill, displaying as it did all the resources of his handiwork. But even above this passion was his ardour for news—news, political, social, legal, or literary; whatever might be the topic, it always interested him, and it was his especial pride to have the initiative of every event that stirred the hearts of the Oughterard public.

The small den in which he performed his functions occupied the corner of the street, giving a view in two directions, so that Hosey, while cutting and curling, never was obliged to lose sight of that world without, in whose doings he felt so strong an interest. In the one easy-chair of this sanctum was Magennis now disposed, waiting for Mr. Lynch, who had just stepped down to "the pound," to liberate the priest's pig. Nor had he long to wait, for Hosey soon made his appearance, and slipping on a very greasy-looking jean-jacket, proceeded to serve him.

"The top of the morning to you, Captain"—he always styled him by the title—"it's a rare pleasure to see you so early in town; but it will be a bad market to-day—cut and curled, Captain?"

"No; shaved!" said Magennis, bluntly.

"And shaved you shall be, Captain—and beautifully shaved, too, for I have got an excellent case from Lamprey's; they came yesterday—came with the writ against Jones Creegan."

"At whose suit?"

"Mrs. Miles Creegan, the other brother's widow," said Hosey, lathering away and talking with breathless rapidity. "There was a clause in old Sam's will, that if ever Tom, the chap that died at Demerara—you'd like more off the whiskers, it's more military. It was only yesterday Major Froode remarked to me what a soldierlike looking man was Captain Magennis."

"Is he in command of the detachment?"

"He is in his Majesty's—1st Foot—the 'Buccaneers,' they used to be called; I suppose you never heard why?"

"No, nor don't want to hear. What kind of a man is the major?"

"He's a smart, well-made man, with rather a haughty look," said Hosey, drawing himself up, and seeming to imply that there was a kind of resemblance between them.

"Is he English or Irish?"

"Scotch, Captain—Scotch; and never gives more than fivepence for a cut and curl, pomatum included.—No letters, Mrs. Cronin," cried he, raising up the movable shutter of the little window; then bending down his ear he listened to some whispered communication from that lady, after which he shut the panel, and resumed his functions. "She's at law with O'Reilly about the party wall. There's the major now going down to the barracks, and I wonder who's the other along with him;" and Hosey rushed to the door to find some clue to the stranger. In less than a quarter of a minute he was back again, asking pardon for absence, and informing Magennis "that the man in plain clothes was a Dublin counsellor, that arrived the night before. I think I can guess what he's here for."

"What is it?" cried Magennis, eagerly.

"There's an election coming on, and the Martins expect a contest.—Nothing for you, Peter," said he to an applicant for a letter outside. "He's looking to be made barony constable these four years, and he's as much chance as I have of being—what shall I say ——"

"Are you done?" asked Magennis, impatiently.

"One minute more, sir—the least touch round the chin—and, as I was saying, Captain, the Martins will lose the borough."

"Who thinks so besides you?" asked Magennis, gruffly.

"It is, I may say, the general opinion; the notion current in —— There's Miss Martin, herself," cried he, running to the window. "Well, really, she handles them ponies elegant!"

"Does she come often into town?"

"I don't think I saw her in Oughterard—let me see when it was — it's two years — no, but it's not far off — it's more than ——"

"Are you done?" said Magennis, impatiently. "I told you that I was pressed for time this morning."

"You're finished now, Captain," said Hosey, presenting him with a small cracked looking-glass. "That's what I call a neat chin and a beautiful sweep of whisker. Thank you, Captain. It's a pleasure and an honour—not to say that it's ——"

Magennis did not wait for the peroration, but, striding hastily out of the little shop, issued into the street that led to the inn. On arriving there, he heard that Mr. Repton had gone out, leaving word that he would be found at Major Froode's quarters. Thither Magennis now repaired, with all the solemn importance befitting his mission.

As he sent in his name, he could overhear the short colloquy that passed within, and perceive that Repton was about to retire; and now the servant ushered him into the presence of a smart, light-whiskered little man, with a pair of shrewd grey eyes, and a high forehead.

"A brother officer, I perceive, sir," said he, looking at the card, whereupon the title Captain was inscribed; "pray take a chair."

"You anticipate the reason of this visit, Major Froode," said the other, with some degree of constraint, as though the preliminaries were the reverse of pleasant to him. The major bowed, and Magennis went on: "I suppose, then, I'm to treat with you as the friend of Mr. Valentine Repton?"

"And you are Mr. Massingbred's?" said the major, answering the question with another.

"I have that honour, sir," said Magennis, pompously; "and now, sir, how soon can it come off?"

"Don't you imagine, Captain Magennis, that a little quiet discussion of the question at issue between two old soldiers, like you and myself, might possibly be advisable? Is there not a chance that our united experience might not suggest an amicable arrangement of this business?"

"Quite out of the question—utterly, totally impossible!" said Magennis, sternly.

"Then perhaps I lie under some misconception," said the major, courteously.

"There was a blow, sir!—a blow!" said Magennis, in the same stern tone.

"I opine that everything that occurred was purely accidental—just hear me out—that a hasty word and a hurried gesture, complicated with the impatient movement of a horse ——"

A long whistle from Magennis interrupted the speech, and the major, reddening to the very top of his high forehead, said:

"Sir, this is unbecoming—are you aware of it?"

"I'm quite ready for anything when this is settled," said Magennis, but with less composure than he desired to assume. "What I meant was, that, for a blow there is but one reparation."

"Doubtless, if the injury admit of no explanation," said the major, calmly; "but in that lies the whole question. Consider two things, Captain Magennis: first of all, the equivocal appearance of *your* friend, the age and standing of *mine*."

"By Jove! you'll kill me in trying to save my life," said Repton, bursting into the room. "I didn't want to play eavesdropper, Froode, but these thin partitions are only soundboards for the voice. This gentleman," added he, turning to Magennis, "is perfectly correct. There was a blow, and a blow has only one consequence, and that one I'm ready for. There may be, for aught I know, twenty ways of settling these matters in London or at the clubs, but we're old-fashioned in our notions in Ireland here; and I don't think that even when we pick up new fashions that we're much the better for them, so that if your friend is here, captain, and ready ——"

"Both, sir; here and ready!"

"Then so am I; and now for the place. Come, Froode, you don't know Ireland as well as I do; just humour me this time, and whenever I get into a scrape in Scotland you shall have it all your own way. Eh, captain, isn't that fair?"

"Spoke like a trump!" muttered Magennis.

"For *me*, did you say?" said Repton, taking a letter from the servant, who had just entered the room

"Yes, sir; and the groom says there's an answer expected."

"The devil take it, I've forgotten my spectacles. Froode, just tell me what's this about, and who it comes from."

"It's Miss Martin's hand," said Froode, breaking the seal and running over the contents. "Oh, I perceive," said he; "they're afraid you have taken French leave of them at Cro' Martin, and she has driven into town to carry you back again."

"That comes of my leaving word at the little post-office to forward my letters to Dublin if not asked for to-morrow. Take a pen, Froode, and write a couple of lines for me: say that a very urgent call—a professional call—will detain me here to-day, but that if not back by dinner-time—Captain Magennis thinks it not likely," added he, turning towards him as he sat, with a very equivocal expression, half grin, half sneer, upon his features—"that I'll be with them at breakfast next morning," resumed Repton, boldly. "Make some excuse for my not answering the note myself—whatever occurs to you. And so, sir," said he, turning to Magennis, "your friend's name is Massingbred? Any relation to Colonel Moore Massingbred?"

"His son—his only son, I believe."

"How strange! I remember the father in the 'House'—I mean the Irish House—five-and-thirty years ago; he was always on the government benches. It was of him Parsons wrote those doggrel lines:

A man without a heart or head,
Who seldom thought, who never read,
A witty word who never said,
One at whose board none ever fed,
Such is the Colonel M—g—b—d.

He couldn't call him a coward, though; for when they went out—which they did—Massingbred's manner on the ground was admirable."

"Will that do?" said Froode, showing a few lines he had hastily jotted down.

"I can't read a word of it, but of course it will," said he; "and then, sir," added he, addressing Magennis, "the sooner we place ourselves at your disposal the better."

Froode whispered something in Repton's ear, and by his manner seemed as if remonstrating with him, when the other said aloud:

"We're in Ireland, major; and, what's more, we're in Galway; as Macleweed said once to a prisoner: 'With a Yorkshire jury, sir, I'd hang you. Your sentence now is, to pay five marks to the king, and find bail for your good behaviour.' You see what virtue there is in locality."

"There's a neat spot about two miles off, on the road to Manm," said Magennis to the major. "We could ride slowly forward, and you might keep us in view."

"In what direction did you say?"

"Take the second turn out of the market-place till you pass the baker's shop, then, to the left, and straight on afterwards. You can't miss it."

"Stop a moment, sir," said Froode to Magennis, as he moved towards the door; "one word, if you please. It is distinctly understood that I have been overruled in this business—that, in fact, I have submitted ——"

"Your point has been reserved," said Repton, laughing, while he led him away; and Magennis at the same moment took his departure.

It was, indeed, with no slight feeling of triumph that this gentleman now hastened back to the Martin Arms. Never did a great diplomatist experience more pride in the conclusion of some crowning act of negotiation than did he in the accomplishment of this affair.

"There's many a man," said he to himself, "who'd have accepted an apology here—there's many a man might have let himself be embarrassed by the circumstances; for, certainly, the taking hold of the bridle was an awkward fact, and if the major was a 'cute fellow he'd have made a stand upon it. I must say that the counsellor showed no backwardness; he comes of that fine old stock we used to have before the Union."

And with this profound reflection he entered the room where Massingbred sat awaiting him.

"It's all settled. We're to meet at the Priest's Gap within an hour," said Magennis, with the air of a man who had acquitted himself cleverly. "And though I say it, that shouldn't, if you were in other hands this morning you wouldn't have got your shot."

"I always relied implicitly upon your skill!" said Massingbred, humouring his vanity.

"Have you anything to arrange—a letter or so to write—for I'll step down to Doctor Hearkins to tell him to follow us?"

Massingbred made no reply as the other left the room. Once more alone, he began to think gravely over his present situation. Nor could all his habitual levity steel him against the conviction that five minutes of common-sense talk might arrange a dispute which now promised a serious ending. "However," thought he, "we are not in the land where such differences admit of amicable solution, and there's no help for it."

A sharp tap at the door startled him from these musings, and before he could well reply to it Daniel Nelligan entered the room, and advanced towards him with an air of mingled ease and constraint.

"I hope you'll forgive me, Mr. Massingbred," he began. "I feel certain that you will at some future day at least, for what I'm going to do." Here he stopped and drew a long breath, as if not knowing in what terms to continue. Massingbred handed him a chair, and took one in front of him without speaking.

"I know what brought you here to-day—I am aware of it all."

He paused, and waited for the other to speak; but Massingbred sat without offering a word, and evidently relying on his own social tact to confound and embarrass his visitor.

"I know, sir, that you are likely to regard my interference as impertinent," resumed Nelligan; "but I trust that the friend of my son, Joe ——"

"I must set you right, upon one point at least, Mr. Nelligan," said Massingbred, with an easy smile. "If you be only as accurate in your knowledge of my affairs as you are with respect to my private friendships, this visit has certainly proceeded from some misconception. Your son and I were friends once upon a time. We are so no longer!"

"I never heard of this. I never knew you had quarrelled!"

"We have not, sir. We have not even met. The discourtesy he has shown me since my arrival here—his avoidance of me, too marked to be explained away—is an offence. The only misfortune is, that it is one which can be practised with impunity."

"My son asks for none such," said Dan, fiercely. "And if your observation is meant for an insult ——" He stopped suddenly, as if checked by something within, and then said, but in a voice full and measured: "I'm a magistrate of this town, sir, and I come here upon information that has reached me of your intentions to commit a breach of the peace."

"My dear Mr. Nelligan," began Massingbred, in his most seductive of manners,—but the other had already witnessed the rupture of the only tie which bound them—the supposed friendship between Joe and Massingbred—and cared nothing for all the blandishments he could bestow,—"my dear Mr. Nelligan, you cannot, surely, suppose that a mere stranger as I am in your county—scarcely ten days here—should have been unfortunate enough to have incurred the animosity of any one."

"I hold here a statement, sir," said Nelligan, sternly, "which, if you please to pledge your honour to be incorrect ——"

"And this is Galway!" exclaimed Massingbred—"this glorious land of chivalrous sentiment of which we poor Englishmen have been hearing to satiety! The Paradise of Point of Honour, then, turns out a very common-place locality after all!"

"I'm proud to say that our county has another reputation than its old one; not but"—and he added the words in some temper—"there are a few left would like to teach you that its character was not acquired for nothing."

"Well, well!" sighed Jack, as he closed his eyes, and appeared as if indulging in a reverie, "of all the mockeries I have lived to see unmasked, this is the worst and meanest."

"I have not come here to listen to this, sir," said Nelligan, haughtily, as he arose. "I waited upon you, intending to accept your solemn pledge, by word of honour, to commit no act hostile to the public peace. Now, sir, I shall call upon you to give me the legal guarantee for this security—good and sufficient bail, and that within an hour!"

"My dear Mr. Nelligan," replied Massingbred, with all the quiet ease of an unruffled temper, "I have not a single friend here, except yourself, upon whom I could call in such an emergency. I am utterly unknown in these parts—my very name unheard of before my arrival. If I *did* by any unhappy circumstance find myself in such an involvement as you speak of, I solemnly assure you my first thought would be to address myself to Mr. Nelligan."

The easy impertinence of this speech would have been perfectly successful a short time previous, when Nelligan yet believed in the close friendship with his son. It came now, however, too late, and the old man listened to it with something bordering on anger.

"Good and sufficient bail, sir—yourself and two others," repeated he, slowly, and moving towards the door.

"One word, I pray," said Jack, rising, and speaking with more earnestness and apparently with more sincerity. "I do not ask you any details as to the circumstances you impute to me, but perhaps you would, as a favour, tell me how this information has reached you?"

"I will not, sir," was the abrupt reply.

"I'm sure no friend of mine could have ——"

"It's no use, Mr. Massingbred; all your address will avail you nothing. You shall not cross-examine *me!*"

"You must, however, see, sir," said Massingbred, "that unknown and unfriended as I am here, bail is out of the question."

"The Bench will hear anything you desire to say on that subject," said Nelligan, coldly. "Good morning to you." And with these words he left the room, and descended into the street.

The passionate warmth which Massingbred had so successfully controlled in the presence of his visitor burst forth the first moment he found himself alone. He inveighed against the country, the people, their habits, and all belonging to them; cursed his own fate at being ever thrown into such companionship; and wound up by resolving to submit to any terms by which he might quit Galway for ever, and forget, for the rest of his days, that he had ever entered it. While he was yet fuming in this fashion, the waiter entered and presented him with a very dirty-looking note, fastened by two wafers, and inscribed "Most private." Massingbred opened it and read:

"My dear Mr. M.,

"We're found out—I believe by Hosey Lynch, where I dropped a bullet-mould this morning when he was shaving me. At all events, we're blown, and as I am under 250*l.* recognisances to keep the peace for three years, I'm off to the mountains till this passes over. I'm sure, from what I saw of the counsellor, that he'll keep himself open to a proposal elsewhere. Meanwhile, there's nothing for it but to give your bail and satisfy the blackguards—bad luck to them—that spoiled the sport! You can go back to the house when all's over, and I'll return as soon as it is safe for

"Your sincere friend,
"T. M."

Scarcely had he finished reading this epistle, when Major Froode presented himself in his chamber, the door of which the waiter was yet holding ajar. Having introduced himself, he briefly informed Massingbred of his position as Mr. Repton's friend, and as briefly stated that the counsellor had been obliged to pledge himself against any hositle intentions—a step which, he foresaw, would also be required of him. "For this reason I have come," continued he, "to say, that any assistance I can be of to you, is frankly at your service. I have learned that you are a stranger here, and not likely to have many acquaintances."

"If they would be satisfied with my word," began Jack.

"Of course they will, and shall," interrupted Froode; "and now, what is there in the way of *amende* my friend can make, for what he is prepared to confess was a mere accident?"

"The acknowledgment is ample. I ask for nothing beyond it," said Massingbred. "I am not quite certain but that my own conduct might require a little explanation; but as your friend's vigour put matters beyond negotiation, at the time, we'll not go back upon bygones."

"And now, sir," burst in Repton, who had waited outside the door—"and now, sir, I beg you to accept the humblest apology I can tender for what has happened. I'm not as safe on my saddle as I used to be forty years ago; and when the nag reared and threatened to fall back upon me, I am ashamed to own that I neither saw nor cared what I struck at. I'd have said all this to you, Mr. Massingbred, after your fire, had we been permitted to go to the ground; and although there is some additional humiliation in saying it, here, I richly deserve all the pain it gives me, for my want of temper. Will you give me your hand?"

"With sincere pleasure," said Jack, shaking him warmly and cordially with both his own.

"There's but one thing more to be done," said Repton. "These borough magistrates, vulgar dogs as they are, will want you to give a bail bond; take no notice of them, but just drive out with me to Cro' Martin, and we'll settle it all there."

"I am not acquainted with Mr. Martin."

"But you shall be. He'll be charmed to know you, and the place is worth seeing. Come, you mustn't leave the West, with only its barbarism in your memory. You must carry away some other recollections."

The new turn affairs had just taken was by no means distasteful to Massingbred. It promised another scene in that drama of life he loved to fashion for himself, with new scenery, new actors, and new incidents. "The counsellor," too, struck his fancy; there was a raciness in the old man's manner, a genial cordiality, united with such palpable acuteness, that he promised himself much pleasure in his society, and so he accepted the proposal with all willingness, and pledged to hold himself ready for his friend within an hour.

Repton and the major had but just left the room, when the former re-entered it hurriedly, and said, "By the way, I must leave you to your own guidance to find your road to Cro' Martin, for there's a young lady below stairs has a lien upon me. You shall be presented to her when you come out, and I promise you it will repay the journey."

"This must be the Mary Martin I've been hearing of," thought Massingbred, when again alone; "and so the morning's work will probably turn out better than I had anticipated."

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE.

WHEN Massingbred arrived at Cro' Martin, he found Repton at the door awaiting him. "I find," said he, "there is little need of introducing you here. Your father was an old acquaintance of Martin's; they sat together for years in Parliament, and Lady Dorothea was related to your family. But here he comes." And Martin approached, with his hand extended in cordial welcome. No one ever knew better how to do the honours of his house, nor could throw more graceful courtesy into the first steps of acquaintanceship. Massingbred, too, was well calculated to appreciate this gift; he had a most intense esteem for "manner," and enjoyed even the necessity it imposed upon himself of exertion to please. With sincere satisfaction was it that he accepted an invitation to pass some days there, and at once despatched a servant to Magennis's house for his trunks.

The adventure of the morning was alluded to but once, and then in a jocular strain, as an incident of no moment whatever, and Massingbred retired to his room to dress for dinner, wondering within himself if he should find the other members of the family as much to his liking as the worthy host had been.

A dinner-party was a rare event at Cro' Martin. The isolation in which they lived was rarely broken by a visitor, and when, by rare accident, some solitary stranger did present himself with a letter of introduction, his stay was merely of a few hours. Now, however, the company included, in addition to the family, Repton, Massingbred, and Nelligan, besides Miss Henderson, who was on that day to appear at dinner. The quondam college friends had not met, neither had Miss Martin ever seen her governess; so that there was no small degree of anticipation as to how such elements would harmonise and agree.

When Massingbred entered the drawing-room, he found Miss Henderson there alone, and at once believing she could be no other than Miss Martin, he proceeded to introduce himself in the best manner he could. Her reception was perfect in ease and self-possession, and they soon found themselves engaged in a lively discussion as to the scenery, the people, and their habits, of which they both appeared to have a very similar appreciation. Lady Dorothea next made her appearance, and advancing towards Massingbred, welcomed him with what, for her, was the extreme of cordiality. "Your mother was a Caradoc, Mr. Massingbred, and the Caradocs are all of our family, so let me claim relationship, at once."

With all the pretensions of a very fine lady, Lady Dorothea knew how to unite very agreeable qualities, not the less successful in her captivations, that she never exercised them without a real desire to please; so that Massingbred soon saw how in the wilds of dreary Connemara there existed a little oasis of polish and civilisation that would have done honour to the most splendid society of London or Paris.

Nor was Massingbred himself less pleasing to her. It was so long—so many, many years since she had met with one fresh from that great world which alone she valued!

Correspondence had kept her to a certain extent informed upon the changes and vicissitudes of society—the births, deaths, marriages, separations, quarrels, and other disasters of those dear friends for whose griefs, absence and time offer so many consolations! But then, the actual appearance, the *coup d'œil* of that world could only be imparted by an observer, imbued with all the spirit that gives observation its peculiar piquancy. This, she found in him, and so agreeably exercised was it, that she actually heard dinner announced without attending, and only as she arose from her seat was reminded to present him to Miss Martin, by the brief phrase: "My niece—Mr. Massingbred;" while she took his arm, with a glance at Mr. Repton, that plainly said—"You are deposed."

The passage to the dinner-room lay through three spacious and splendid rooms, which now were brilliantly lighted up, and lined with servants in rich liveries, a degree of state Massingbred was not a little pleased at, partly suspecting that it was intended to do himself honour. As they moved slowly through the last of these, the door suddenly opened, and young Nelligan entered. He had returned late from a long ride, and heard nothing whatever of Massingbred's arrival. With an exclamation of "Jack!—Massingbred!" he bounded forward; but the other showed no recognition of him, and directing Lady Dorothea's attention to the richness of a picture-frame, passed calmly on into the dinner-room.

"You must bring up the rear alone, Nelligan," said Martin, who had given his arm to Miss Henderson; and Joe followed, almost overwhelmed with mingled shame and amazement.

For an instant the possibility of mistake assuaged his sense of mortification, but no sooner did he find himself at table, and directly opposite to Massingbred, than he perceived there was no ground whatever for this consolation. It was indeed Massingbred, just as he had seen him the first day in the Common's Hall at dinner, and when his cold, supercilious manner had struck him so disagreeably.

What a terrible vengeance for all the superiority Nelligan had displayed over him in the Examination Hall was Massingbred's present success, for success it was. With all that consummate readiness the habit of society imparts, Jack could talk well on a great variety of topics, and possessed besides that especial tact to make others so far participators in his observations, that they felt a partnership in the agreeability. Lady Dorothea was perfectly charmed with him; it was the triumph, as it were, of one of her own set. His anecdotes—not very pointed or curious in themselves—had the marked characteristic of always referring to distinguished individuals, so that what was deficient in wit was more than compensated by the rank of the actors. Martin enjoyed his conversation with all his own complacent ease, and felt delighted with one who could play all the game without an adversary. Mary was pleased and astonished together—the pleasure being even less than the amazement—at all he seemed to know of life and the world, and how intimately one so young seemed to have mixed in society. As for Repton, he relished the other's powers with the true zest of a pleasant talker; they were of different styles, and no disagreeable rivalry marred the appreciation.

Amidst all these silent or spoken testimonies sat poor Nelligan, overwhelmed with shame. Massingbred had refused to recognise him! and it was left to his own gloomy thoughts to search out the reason. At first Joe avoided meeting the other's look; he dreaded he knew not what of impertinence or insult, to which the time and place could offer no reparation; but gradually he grew to perceive that Massingbred's cold eye met his own, without a spark of meaning, nor was there in voice, manner, or bearing, a single evidence of constraint or awkwardness to be detected.

Miss Henderson alone seemed to listen to him with easy indifference; and more than once, when Jack put forth his most showy pretensions, he was secretly mortified to see how little impression he had made on the dark beauty with the haughty smile. This was exactly the kind of defiance that Massingbred never declined, and he determined within himself to attempt the conquest. As the party returned to the drawing-room he asked Lady Dorothea to present him more formally to the young lady, whose acquaintance he had dared to obtrude upon before dinner, but she coldly said:

"Oh! it's no matter, she's only the governess." An explanation she deemed quite sufficient to subdue any rising feeling of interest regarding her.

"And the gentleman who sat next her at dinner?" asked he.

"A neighbour—that is, the son of one of our borough people. I have not introduced him to you, for of course you are not likely to meet again. As you were remarking, a while ago, society in England is gradually undergoing that change which in France was accomplished in a year or two."

"With the aid of the guillotine and the 'lanterne,'" said Jack, smiling.

"Just so; they used sharp remedies for a quick cure. But I own to you that I have not yet reconciled myself, nor do I see how I shall ever reconcile myself, to intimacy with a class not only whose habits and instincts, but whose very natures are adverse to our own. That young man now, for instance, they speak of him as quite a college wonder. I'm ashamed to say I don't know wherein his great successes lie; but they tell me that he has distanced every competitor of his day, and stands alone in his pre-eminence, and yet we saw him to-day not venturing on a remark, nor even hazarding an opinion on the topics we talked of, and silent where he ought to have been heard with advantage."

"Is he bashful?" said Jack, with a lazy drawl.

"I don't think it's that; at least not altogether."

"Supercilious, perhaps?"

"Oh! certainly not," replied she, hastily. "The company in which he found himself is the best answer to that. He could not presume ——"

"It was, then, downright fear," broke in Massingbred; "the terror that even clever men cannot shake off when thrown amongst a class they're unused to."

"And very naturally so. I'm sure he must be puzzled to imagine why he is here. Indeed, we have only known him a few days back. It was one of Mr. Martin's sudden caprices to ask him to Cro' Martin. He fancied he ought to conciliate—I believe that's the phrase in vogue—the borough people, and this young man's father is the chief of them." And now Lady Dorothea turned from the topic as one unworthy of further thought, and entered upon the more congenial theme of her own high relatives and connexions in England. It was strange enough that Massingbred's remote alliance with her family was sufficient to induce an intimacy and familiarity with him, which years of mere acquaintanceship could not have effected. That his grand-aunt had been a Conway, and his great-grandfather's half-brother was married to a Jernyngham, were all a species of Freemasonry by which he was admitted at once to the privilege of confidential discussion.

It was no small mortification to Massingbred to spend his evening in these genealogical researches; he had seen the two young girls move off into an adjoining room, from which at times the sounds of a piano, and of voices singing, issued, and was half mad with impatience to be along with them. However, it was a penalty must be exacted, and he thought that the toll once paid he had secured himself against all demands for the future.

Not caring to participate in the many intricacies of those family discussions wherein the degrees of relationship of individuals seem to form the sole points of interest, we shall betake ourselves to the little blue drawing-room, where, seated at the piano together, the two young girls talked, while their fingers strayed along the notes as though affording a species of involuntary accompaniment to their words. Nelligan, it is true, was present; but, unnoticed by either, he sat apart in a distant corner, deep in his own brooding thoughts.

Mary had only made Miss Henderson's acquaintance on that evening, but already they were intimate. It was, indeed, no common boon for her to obtain companionship with one of her own age, and who, with the dreaded characteristics of a governess, was in reality a very charming and attractive person. Miss Henderson sang with all the cultivated knowledge of a musician; and, while she spoke of foreign countries where she had travelled, lapsed at times into little snatches of melody, as it were, illustrative of what she spoke. The delight Mary experienced in listening was unbounded; and if at moments a sad sense of her own neglected education shot through her mind, it was forgotten the next instant in her generous admiration.

"And how are *you*, who have seen this bright and brilliant world you speak of," said Mary, "to sit quietly down in this unbroken solitude, where all the interests are of the humblest and more ordinary kind?"

"You forget that I saw all these things, as it were, on sufferance," replied she. "I was not born to them, nor could ever hope for more than a passing glance at splendours wherein I was not to share. And as for the quiet monotony here, an evening such as this, companionship like yours, are just as much above my expectations."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Mary, eagerly. "You were as surely destined for a salon, as I was for the rude adventures of my own wayward life. You don't know what a strange existence it is."

"I have heard, however!" said the other calmly.

"Tell me—do tell me—what you have been told of me, and don't be afraid of wounding my vanity; for, I pledge you my word, I do think of myself with almost all the humility that I ought."

"I have heard you spoken of in the cabins of the poor as their only friend, their comforter, and their hope; the labourer knows you as his succour—one by whose kind intervention he earns his daily bread; their children love you as their own chosen protector."

"But it's not of these things I'm speaking," said Mary, rapidly. "Do they not call me self-willed, passionate, sometimes imperious?"

"Yes; and capricious at times!" said the other, slowly.

Mary coloured, and her voice faltered as she said:

"There, they were unjust. The impracticable tempers I have to deal with — the untutored minds and undisciplined natures—often lead me into seeming contradictions."

"Like the present, perhaps," said Miss Henderson.

"How! the present?" cried Mary.

"That, while claiming the merit of humility, you at once enter upon a self defence."

"Well, perhaps I *am* capricious!" said Mary, smiling.

"And haughty?" asked the other, slowly.

"I believe so!" said Mary, with a degree of dignity that seemed to display the sentiment while confessing to it.

"I have never heard a heavier accusation against Miss Martin than these," said she, "and I have lived with those who rarely scruple how to criticise their betters."

Mary was silent and thoughtful: she knew not how to interpret the mingled praise and censure she had just listened to.

"But tell me rather of yourself," said Mary, as though willing to turn the topic of conversation. "I should like to hear your story."

"At thirteen years of age—I believe even a year later—I was the playfellow of the young gentleman you see yonder," said Kate Henderson, "but who, to-night, seems incapable of remembering anything or anybody."

"Of Mr. Nelligan?" repeated Mary. And Joseph started as he heard his name, looked up, and again relapsed into reverie.

"I'm not sure that we were not in love. I almost confess that I was, when my father sent me away to France to be educated. I was very sad—very, very sad—at being taken away from home and thrown amongst strangers, with none of whom I could even interchange a word; and I used to sit and cry for hours by myself, and write sorrowful love-letters to "dearest Joseph," and then imagine the answers to them; sometimes I actually wrote them, and would suffer agonies of anguish before I dared to break the seal and learn the contents. Meanwhile, I was acquiring a knowledge of French, and knew a little of music, and used to sing in our choir at chapel, and learned to believe the world was somewhat larger than I had hitherto thought it, and that St. Gudule was finer than the mean little church at Oughterard; and worse still—for it *was* worse—that the sous-lieutenants and cadets of the Military College had a much more dashing, daring look about them than "poor Joseph;" for so I now called him to myself, and gave up the correspondence soon after.

"Remember, Miss Martin, that I was but a child at this time—at least, I was little more than fourteen—but in another year I was a woman, in all the consciousness of certain attractions, clever enough to know that I could read and detect the weak points in others, and weak enough to fancy that I could always take advantage of them. This incessant spirit of casuistry, this passion for investigating the temper of those about you, and making a study of their natures for purposes of your own, is the essence of a convent life; you have really little else to do, and your whole bent is to ascertain why Sister Agnes blushes, or why Beatrice fainted twice at the Angelus. The minute anatomy of emotions is a very dangerous topic. At this very moment I cannot free myself from the old habit; and as I see young Mr. Nelligan there sitting with his head in his hand, so deep in thought as not to notice us, I begin to examine why is it he is thus, and on what is he now brooding?"

"And can you guess?" asked Mary, half eagerly.

"I could be certain, if I were but to ask him a question or two."

"Pray do, then, if only to convince me of your skill."

"But I must be alone, and that is scarcely possible—scarcely becoming."

"Let us contrive some way—think of something."

"It is too late now; he is about to leave the room," said Kate, cautiously. "How pale he looks, and how anxious his eye has become. I thought at first there was some constraint at meeting *me* here; he feared, perhaps,—but no, that would be unworthy of him."

She ceased, for Nelligan had now drawn nigh to where they sat, and stood as if trying to collect himself to say something.

"Do you sing, Mr. Nelligan?" asked Kate.

"No; I am ignorant of music," said he, half abstractedly.

"But you like it?" asked Mary.

"Yes, I believe I do—that is, it calms and quiets me. If I could understand it, it would do more."

"Then why not understand it, since that is the way you phrase it?" asked Kate. "Everybody can be a musician to a certain degree of proficiency. There is no more ear required than you want to learn a language."

"Then you shall teach *me*," cried Mary, eagerly.

Kate took up her hand and pressed it to her lips for a reply.

"Foreigners—men, I mean—are all so well aware of this, that they cultivate music as a necessary part of education; few attain high eminence, but all know something of it. But somehow we have got to believe that cultivation in England must always tend to material profit. We learn this, that, and t'other, to be richer, or greater, or higher, but never to be more acceptable in society—more agreeable or pleasanter company."

"We haven't time," said Nelligan, gravely.

"For what have we not time? Do you mean we have no time to be happy?" cried Repton, suddenly stepping in amongst them. "Now, my dear young ladies, which of you will bid highest for the heart of an old lawyer—by a song?"

"It must be Miss Henderson," said Mary, smiling, "for I don't sing."

"Not a ballad?—not even one of the Melodies?"

"Not even one of the Melodies," said she, sorrowfully.

"Shame upon me for that 'even,'" said Repton; "but you see what comes of surviving one's generation. I lived in an age when the 'Last Rose of Summer,' and the 'Harp that Once,' were classical as Homer's 'Hymns,' but I have now fallen upon times when English music is estimated in the same category with English cookery, and both deemed very little above barbarous To be sure," added he, "it does seem very like a poetical justice for the slavish adherence of *our* education to Greek and Roman literature, that our ladies should only sing to us in the languages of Italy or Germany."

"I hope you would not imply that we are as little versed in these as great scholars are in the others?" said Kate Henderson, slily.

"Sharply said, Miss, and truthfully insinuated too! Not to mention that there is courage in such a speech before Mr. Nelligan, here."

"Yes—very true—a just remark!" said Joseph, who only overheard a reference to himself without understanding to what it alluded. And now a very joyous burst of laughter from the others startled him, while it covered him with confusion.

"We must make them sing, Nelligan," said Repton, gaily. "They'll vanquish us in these tilting matches of word-fence.—Now, Miss Henderson, something very plaintive and very sentimental, to suit the tenderness of a feeling heart."

"I'll sing for you with pleasure," said Kate. "Will this suit you?" And with a short prelude she sang one of those brilliant little snatches of Venetian melody, which seem like the outburst of a sudden inspiration—wild, joyous, floating as they are—wherein such is the expression, that sounds usurp the place of language, and the mind is carried away by a dreamy fascination impossible to resist.

"How often have I heard that on the Lido!" said Massingbred, entering the room hastily; "and what a glorious thing it is!"

"Then you know this?" said Kate, running her fingers over the notes, and warbling out another of the popular airs of the same class.

"The last time I heard that," said Jack, musingly, "was one night when returning home from a late party, along the Grand Canal at Venice. There is a single word at the end of each verse which should be uttered by a second voice. Just as I passed beneath a brilliantly-lighted salon, the sounds of this melody came floating forth, and as the stanza finished I supplied the 'refrain.'"

"You?" cried Kate, eagerly.

"Yes; but why do you ask?"

"Do you remember the exact spot?" said she, not heeding his question.

"As well as though I were there only yesterday."

"Shall I tell you where it was?" He waited, and she went on—"It was under the balcony of the Mocenigo Palace."

"Why this is witchcraft," cried Jack; "you are perfectly correct."

"The bouquet that was thrown to you from the window fell into the water."

"But I regained it. I have it still," cried he, more eagerly; "and yours was the hand that threw it?"

She nodded assent.

"How strange, is it not, that we should meet here?" He paused for a minute or two, and then said, "It was the Duchesse de Courcelles lived there at the time?"

"Yes, we passed the winter in that palace."

"Miss Henderson was the companion of the young Princess," said Lady Dorothea, who had just joined the group, and experienced no slight shock at observing the tone of easy familiarity in which the conversation was conducted. But Massingbred seemed wonderfully little moved by the intelligence, for, drawing his chair closer to Kate's, he led her to talk of Venice and its life, till, imperceptibly as it were, the discourse glided into Italian! What a dangerous freemasonry is the use of a foreign language, lifting the speakers out of the ordinary topics, and leading them away to distant scenes and impressions, which, constituting a little world apart, give a degree of confidential feeling to intercourse. Massingbred would willingly have lent himself to the full enjoyment of this illusion, but Kate, with quicker tact, saw all the difficulties and embarrassment it would occasion, and under pretext of searching for some music, escaped at once from the spot.

"How I envy you, dear girl," said Mary, following her, and passing her arm affectionately around her. "What a happiness must it be to possess such gifts as yours, which, even in their careless exercise, are so graceful. Tell me frankly, is it too late for me to try ——"

"You overrate *me* as much as you disparage yourself," said Kate, mildly; "but if you really will accept me, I will teach you the little that I know, but, in return, will you make *me* your friend?"

Mary pressed the other's hand warmly within her own.

"Here are some vows of everlasting friendship going forward, I'll be sworn," said old Repton, stepping in between them; "and you ought to have a legal opinion as to the clauses—eh, young ladies, am I not right?"

"When was Mr. Repton wrong?" said Mary, laughing.

"When he waited till his present age to fall in love!" said he, gaily. "But, seriously, what have you done with our young student? Of all the woebegone faces I ever beheld, his was the very saddest, as he moved into the large drawing-room a while ago. Which of you is to blame for this?"

"Not guilty, upon my honour," said Mary, with mock solemnity.

"I'm half afraid that our showy friend has eclipsed him in *your* eyes, as I own to you he has in *mine*, clever fellow that he is."

"Are you not charmed with yourself that you did not shoot him this morning?" said Mary, laughing.

"I am sincerely gratified that he has not shot *me*, which, taking his pistol performance on the same level with his other acquirements, was not so very improbable!"

"There's your uncle stealing away to bed," said Repton, "and fancying that nobody remarks him. Shall I be cruel enough to mar the project? Martin—Martin—come here for a moment; we want your opinion on a knotty point."

"I know what it is," said Martin, smiling; "the question under discussion is, 'Whether you or Mr. Massingbred were the more successful to-day?'"

"I think Mr. Massingbred may claim the prize," said Mary Martin, with a sly whisper; "he made Lady Dorothea cry."

"Ay," said Repton, "but *I* made young Nelligan laugh!"

And now the party broke up, Massingbred lingering a little behind to say something to Miss Henderson, and then betaking himself to his chamber, well satisfied with his day, and the change it had wrought in his fortunes. Perhaps a few passages from a letter that he, on that same night, penned to one of his friends in Dublin, will not be ill-timed as an exponent of his sentiments. The letter was written, directing certain articles of dress to be forwarded to him at once, by coach, and contained these paragraphs:

"You now know how I came here: the next thing is to tell you of the place itself. The house is large and admirably 'montée'—abundance of servants, well drilled, and orderly. The master a nonentity, apparently; easy-tempered and good-humoured; liking the quiet monotony of his humdrum life, and only asking that it may not be interfered with. His wife, a fine lady of the school of five-and-forty years ago—a nervous terrorist about mob encroachments and the democratic tendencies of the times—insufferably tiresome on genealogies and 'connections,' and what many would call downright vulgar in the amount of her pretension. Gratitude—for I have the honour of being a favourite already—seals my lips against any further or harsher criticism. As for the niece, she is decidedly handsome; a great deal of style about her too; with a degree of—shall I call it daring? for it is more like courage than any other quality—that tells you she is the uncontrolled ruler over the wild regions and wild people around her. With more of manner, she would be very charming; but perhaps she is better in the unfettered freedom of her own capricious independence: it certainly suits her to perfection. And now I should have completed my catalogue, if it were not for the governess. Ay, Harry, the governess! And just fancy, under this unimposing title, a dark-eyed, haughty-looking girl—I don't think she can be above twenty or twenty-one—with a carriage and port that might suit an Archduchess of Austria. She has travelled all over Europe—been everywhere—seen everything, and stranger again, everybody; for she was what they style a companion. By Jove! she must have been a very charming one; that is, if she liked it; for if she did not, Hal! ——At all events, here she is; only having arrived the very day before myself; so that we are free to discuss the family, and compare notes together, in the most confidential fashion.

"Of course I needn't tell *you* Jack Massingbred does not fall in love—the very phrase implies it must be beneath one—but I already see that if such a girl were a Lady Catherine, or a Lady Agnes, with a father in the Upper House, and two brothers in the 'Lower,' her dowry anything you like above thirty thousand — that, in short, even Jack himself might exhibit the weakness of inferior mortals—for she is precisely one of those types that are ever looking upward—a girl with a high ambition, I'll be sworn, and formed to make the man, whose fortunes she shared, stand forward in the van and distinguish himself.

"These are our whole *dramatis personæ*, if I include an old barrister, with a racy humour and a strong stock of Bar anecdotes; and young Nelligan, the Medal man, whom you quizzed me so much for noticing in Dublin. You were right then, Harry; he *is* a low fellow, and I was wrong in ever thinking him otherwise. I chanced upon his father's acquaintance rather oddly; and the son has not forgiven it. When we met here, yesterday, he fancied that we were to speak, and was actually rushing forward to shake hands with the most enthusiastic warmth; but with that manner which you have often admired, and once encouraged, when you called me the 'Cool of the day,' I pulled him up dead short, stared, and passed on. At dinner, I managed to ignore him so utterly that everybody else fell into the trap, and he dined as a tutor, or the chaplain, or the agent's son might—mingling his sighs with the soup, and sipping his claret in all dreariness.

"You will see, even from these hasty lines, that there is enough here to interest and amuse; food for observation, and opportunity for malice. What can a man want more? The 'joint and the pickles.' They have asked me to stay,—they have even entreated; and so I mean to pass a week—perhaps two—here. I conclude that will give me enough of it: however, you shall hear frequently of my *res gestæ*, and learn all that befals

"JACK MASSINGBRED.

". . . . When you pass that way, pray see what letters there may be lying for me in my chambers. If any of my father's—he writes in a large splashy hand—and the seal, two maces, saltierwise—forward them here. I am, or I shall soon be, in want of money; and as I have overdrawn my allowance already, I shall be obliged to issue bonds, bearing a certain interest. Can you recommend me to a safe capitalist?—not Fordyce—nor Henniker—nor yet Sloan—with all of whom I have held dealings, mutually disagreeable. It is a sad reflection, that the stamp worth five shillings upon a piece of unsullied paper, is absolutely valueless when the words 'Jack Massingbred' are inscribed beneath. Try, and, if you can, solve this curious problem.

"At all events, write to me here: supply me freely with news, for I am supposed to be acquainted with all that goes on, socially and politically, and I shall be driven to imagination if you do not store me with fact."

CHAPTER XVIII.

STATECRAFT.

It was a cabinet council; they were met in Lady Dorothea's boudoir, Martin and Mr. Repton being summoned to her presence. A letter had that morning reached her ladyship from a very high quarter; the writer was the Marquis of Reckington, a very distant connection, who had suddenly been graciously pleased, after a long interval of utter obliviousness, to remember that Lady Dorothea was his relative, and yet living! Whatever pride her ladyship might have summoned to her aid to repel the slights or impertinences of the vulgar, she displayed a most Christian forgiveness as she broke the seal of an epistle from one who had left several of her own without answers, and even replied to her application for a staff appointment for her son, by a cold assurance that these were times when "nothing but fitness and superior qualifications entitled any man to advancement in the public service." Oh dear, were there ever any other times since the world was made! Is not merit the only passport to place? and high desert and capacity the sole recommendation to favour? Of all the immense advantages of a representative government, is there any more conspicuous than the unerring certainty with which men of ability rise to eminence without other aid than their own powers; and that, in a system like ours, family influence, wealth, name, connections, and Parliamentary support, are just so much mere dross?

If any one be incredulous of the virtue of public men, let him only ask for a place; let him entreat his great friend—everybody has at least one great friend—mine is a Coroner—to make him a Junior Lord, or a Vice-Something, and see what the answer will be. Polite, certainly; nothing more so; but what a rebuke to self-seeking!—what a stern chastisement to the ignorant presumption that places are awarded by means of favour, or that the public service is ever filled through the channels of private influence! Far from it. He is told that our age is an incorruptible one, that Ministers pass sleepless nights in balancing the claims of treasury clerks, and that Lord Chancellors suffer agonies in weighing the merits of barristers of six years' standing. "We have but one rule for our guidance: the best man in the best place." A high-sounding maxim, which it would be excessively uncivil to disparage by asking what constitutes "a best man." Is he some unscrupulous partisan, who first gave his fortune, and afterwards his fame, to the support of a party? Is he the indisputable disposer of three, or perhaps four, votes in the House? Is he a floating buoy to be anchored in either roadstead of politics, and only to be secured to either, for a consideration? Is he the dangerous confidant of some damaging transaction? Or is he the deserter from a camp, where his treason may sow disaffection? These several qualifications have ere this served to make up "a best man;" and, strangely enough, are gifts which fit him for the Army, the Navy, the Home Service, or the Colonies.

Let us turn from this digression, into which we have fallen half inadvertently, and read over some parts of Lord Reckington's letter. It was somewhat difficult to decipher, as most great men's letters are, and displayed in more than one place the signs of correction. Although it had been, as we have said, a very long time since any correspondence had occurred between the "cousins," his lordship resumed the intercourse as though not a week had intervened. After a little playful chiding over the laxity of her ladyship's writing habits—three of hers had been left unreplied to!—and some of that small gossip of family changes and events, never interesting to any but the direct actors, his lordship approached the real topic of his letter; and, as he did so, his writing grew firmer, and larger, and bolder, like the voice of a man who spoke of what truly concerned him:

"I thought, my dear Dora, I had done with it all. I flattered myself that I had served my time in public capacities, and that neither the Crown nor its advisers could reasonably call upon me for further sacrifices. *You* know how little to my taste were either the cares or ambitions of office. In fact, as happens to most men who are zealous for the public service, my official career imposed far more of sacrifices than it conferred privileges. Witness the occasions in which I was driven to reject the claims of my nearest and dearest friends, in compliance with that nervous terror of imputed favouritism so fatal to all in power! I thought, as I have said, that they had no fair claim upon me any longer. I asked nothing; indeed, many thought I was wrong there. But so it was, I quitted office without a pension, and without a ribbon! It was late on a Saturday evening, however, when a Cabinet messenger arrived at 'Beech Woods' with an order for me to repair at once to Windsor. I was far from well; but there was no escape. Immediately on arriving I was summoned to the presence, and before I had paid my respects, his Majesty, who was much excited, said, 'Reckington, we want you. You must go to Ireland!' I believe I started, for he went on: 'I'll have no refusal. There is but one settlement of this question that I will accept of. You shall go to Ireland!' The king then entered with considerable warmth, but with all his own remarkable perspicuity, into a detail of late changes and events in the Cabinet. He was excessively irritated with B——, and spoke of G—— as one whom he never could forgive. He repeatedly said, 'I have been duped—I have been tricked;' and, in fact, exhibited a degree of emotion which, combined with the unbounded frankness of his manner towards me, affected me almost to tears. Of course, my dear Dora, personal considerations ceased at once to have any hold upon me, and I assured his Majesty that the remainder of my life was freely at his disposal, more than requited, as it already was, by the precious confidence he had, that day, reposed in me. I must not weary you with details. I accepted and kissed hands as Viceroy on Monday morning; since that I have been in daily communication with G——, who still remains in office. We have discussed Ireland from morning to night, and I hope and trust have at last come to a thorough understanding as to the principles which must guide the future administration. These I reserve to talk over with you when we meet: nor do I hesitate to say that I anticipate the very greatest benefit in the fruits of your long residence and great powers of observation of this strange people." The letter here went off into a somewhat long-winded profession of the equal-handed justice which was to mark the acts of the admistration. It was to be, in fact, a golden era of equity and fairness; but, somehow, as codicils are occasionally found to revoke the body of the testament, a very suspicious little paragraph rather damaged this glorious conclusion. "I don't mean to say, my dear coz, that we are to neglect our followers—the Government which could do so never yet possessed, never deserved to possess, able support—but we must discriminate—we must distinguish between the mere partisan who trades on his principles, and that high-minded and honourable patriot who gives his convictions to party. With the noisy declaimer at public meetings, the mob-orator or pamphleteer, we shall have no sympathy. To the worthy country gentleman—independent by fortune as well as by principle—extending the example of a blameless life to a large neighbourhood—aiding us by his counsels as much as by the tender of his political support—to him, I say, we shall show our gratitude, not grudgingly nor sparingly, but freely, openly, and largely. You now know in what ranks we wish to see our friends, in the very van of which array I reckon upon yourself." We shall again skip a little, since here the writer diverged into a slight dissertation on the indissoluble ties of kindred, and the links, stronger than adamant, that bind those of one blood together. After a brief but rapid survey of the strong opposition which was to meet them, he went on: "Of course all will depend upon our parliamentary support; without a good working majority we cannot stand, and for this must we use all our exertions." A few generalities on the comfort and satisfaction resulting from "safe divisions" ensued, and then came the apparently careless question, "What can *you* do for us? Yes, my dear Dora, I repeat, what can *you* do for us? What we need, is the support of men who have courage enough to merge old prejudices and old convictions in their full trust in us; who, with the intelligence of true statesmanship, will comprehend the altered condition of the country, and not endeavour to adapt the nation to *their* views, but rather *their* views to the nation. In a word, a wise and liberal policy, not based upon party watchwords and antiquated symbols, but on the prospect of seeing Ireland great and united. Now, will Martin come to our aid in this wise? He ought to be in parliament for his county. But if he be too indolent, or too happy at home, whom can he send us? And again, what of the borough? They tell me that Kilcock, seeing his father's great age, will not stand where a contest might be expected, so that you must necessarily be prepared with another."

Again the writer launched out upon the happiness he felt at being able to appeal thus candidly and freely to his own "dearest kinswoman," inviting her to speak as frankly in return, and to believe that no possible difference of political opinion should ever throw a coldness between those whose veins were filled with the same blood, and whose hearts throbbed with the same affections. Her ladyship's voice slightly faltered as she read out the concluding paragraph, and when she laid the letter down, she turned away her head and moved her handkerchief to her eyes.

As for Martin, he sat still and motionless, his gaze firmly directed to Repton, as though seeking in the impassive lines of the old lawyer's face for some clue to guide and direct him.

"You used to be a Tory, Martin?" said Repton, after a pause.

"Yes, to be sure, we were always with that party."

"Well, there's an end of them now," said the other; "what's to follow and fill their place, my Lord Reckington may be able to say, *I* cannot. I only know that *they* exist no longer, and the great question for you—at least one of the great questions—is, have you spirit enough to join a travelling party without knowing whither they're journeying?"

"And what may be the other great question, sir?" asked Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"The other is, what will it cost in money?—ay, my lady, in money—because any other outlay will not require searches nor title-deeds, loans, mortgages, nor bond-debts."

"To contest the county would cost ten thousand pounds—Scanlan says so," rejoined Martin.

"And the borough?" asked Repton.

"A few hundreds would suffice; at least they have done so hitherto."

"Then remain content with the cheap luxury of the borough," said Repton. "You don't want anything from these people, Martin. You don't covet a Peerage—you wouldn't accept a Baronetcy. You remember what Langton said, when told that the King was going to give him 'the Red Hand.' 'If I have been unfortunate enough to incur his Majesty's displeasure, I must deplore it deeply, but surely my innocent son should not be included in the penalty of my offence. Therefore, in all humility, I beseech and entreat the royal favour to commute the sentence into Knighthood, so that the disgrace may die with me.'"

"There were times when such insolence would have cost him dearly," said her ladyship, sternly.

"I am not sorry that we don't live in them, my lady," replied Repton. "But to return: as I was saying, you ask for no favours; why should you expend ten or fifteen thousand pounds to advocate views of whose tendencies you know nothing, and principles whose very meaning you are in ignorance of?"

"I anticipated every word of this," said Lady Dorothea. "I told Mr. Martin, this morning, almost literally, the exact advice you'd proffer."

"I am proud that your ladyship should have read me so justly," said Repton, bowing.

An insolent toss of her head was the significant answer to this speech.

"But were I to speak my mind more candidly, I'd even say, let the borough go after the county; and for this plain reason," said Repton, speaking with increased firmness and animation, "you neither seek for the ambition of political life, nor want to make a trade of its casualties."

"Is it not possible, sir, that we might desire the natural influence that should arise out of our station in society and our rank in this county?" said Lady Dorothea, proudly.

"And your ladyship has it, and can never lose it. Having a vote or two to throw into a Ministerial division would never repay you for the anxieties and cares of contested elections. Ah, my lady, what do *you* care for the small flatteries of London attentions."

"We should have these, sir, as our right," broke she in.

"To be sure you would, and much happiness do I hope they would confer," added he, in a tone only overheard by Martin; then continued aloud: "As to the patronage at your disposal, would you take a present of it? Whom do you want to make tide-waiters, gaugers, barony constables, or even clerks of the peace? Of all men living, who is so free of hungry dependents or poor relations!"

"I must say, sir, that you reduce the question of political support to a very intelligible one of material benefit," said her ladyship, with a sneer; "but, just for argument sake, imagine that there should be such a thing as a little principle in the matter."

"I'm going to that part of the case, my lady," said Repton. "Martin is a Tory; now, what are the men coming into power? I wish you could tell me. Here, for instance, is one of their own journals"—and he opened a newspaper and ran his eye over the columns—"ay, here it is: 'With regard to Ireland, Lord Reckington's appointment as Viceroy is the best guarantee that the rights of Irishmen of every persuasion and every denomination will be respected.' So far so good;" and he read on in a low, humdrum voice for some minutes, till he came to the following: "'No privileged class will any longer be tolerated—no exceptional loyalty admitted as an excuse for insufferable oppression and tyranny—the wishes and benefits of the people—the real people of that country, will at length enter into the views of an administration, and Ireland as she is—not the possible Ireland of factious enthusiasts—be governed by men determined to redress her grievances and improve her capacities.' Now, Martin, you want no augur to interpret that oracle. They are going to rule you by the people; but the people must be represented. Now, who represents them? Not the demagogue—he is merely their tool; the real representative is the priest—don't laugh, my dear friend, at such a shadowy possibility, the thing is nearer than you dream of. No administration ever yet tried to govern Ireland except by intimidation; the Beresfords were undertakers once, and they did their work very well, let me tell you—they advanced their friends and whipped their enemies; and what with peerages for one set, and pitched caps for the other, they ruled Ireland. Then there came the Orangemen, who rather blundered their work; there were too many heads amongst them, and the really clever fellows were overborne by brawling, talkative fools, who always had the masses with them because they *were* fools. Still they ruled Ireland. They preserved the country to the King's crown; and I say once more, that was no small matter. And now we have arrived at a new era: we have obtained Emancipation, and must look out for another stamp of administrators, and I see nothing for it but the priest. Of course you, and every man of your station, sneer at the notion of being dictated to by Father Luke, in the greasy leather small-clothes and dirty black boots—only, himself, a cottier once removed—a plant of the wild growth of the fields, cultivated, however, in the hot-beds of Maynooth—a forcing-house whose fruits you are yet to taste of! Sneer away, Martin; but my name is not Val Repton if those men do not rule Ireland yet! Ay, sir, and rule it in such a fashion as your haughty Beresfords, and Tottenhams, and Tisdalls never dreamed of! They'll treat with the Government on equal terms—so much, for so much—and, what's more, it won't be higgling for a place, here, or a peerage, there; but they'll have the price paid down in hard legislative coin—Acts of Parliament, sir,—privileges for themselves and their order,—benefits to 'the Church,'—and, when nothing better or more tempting offers, insults and slights to their antagonists. You, and all like you, will be passed over as if you never existed: the Minister will not need you: you'll be so many general officers on the retired list, and only remarked when you swell the crowd at a levee."

"So, sir, according to this special prediction of yours, we have nothing left us but to live on our estates, enjoy what we can of our fortunes, and leave the interests of the nation to those our inferiors in rank, station, and property?"

"Such a period as your ladyship has pictured forth—a little strongly, perhaps—is before you. Whether the interval be destined to be long or short, will, in great measure, depend upon yourselves."

"That agrees with what Scanlan said the other day," said Martin.

"Scanlan!" echoed her ladyship, with most profound contempt.

"Who is this Scanlan?" asked Repton.

"There he comes to answer for himself," said Martin. "The fellow drives neatly: see how cleverly he swept round that sharp turn! He may be 'at fault' about the world of politics, but, *my* word for it! he is a rare judge of a hack."

"And, now that you suggest it," said Repton, musingly, "what an instinctive shrewdness there is on every subject—I don't care what it is—about fellows that deal in horseflesh. The practice of buying and selling, searching out flaws, here, detecting defects, there, gives a degree of suspectful sharpness in all transactions; besides that, really none but a naturally clever fellow ever graduates in the stable. You smile, my lady, but some of our very first men have achieved the triumphs of the turf."

"Shall we have Scanlan in and hear the news?" asked Martin.

"Not here. If you please, you may receive him in the library, or your own room."

"Then, come along, Repton. We can resume this affair in the afternoon, or to-morrow." And, without waiting for a reply, he passed his arm within the other's and led him away. "You have been too abrupt with her, Repton; you have not made due allowances for her attachment to family influences," said he, in a whisper, as they went along.

Repton smiled half contemptuously.

"Oh, it's all very easy for you to laugh, my dear fellow, but, trust me, there's nothing to be done with my lady in that fashion."

"Turn the flank—eh?" said the old lawyer, slily. "Ah, Martin, don't teach *me* how to deal with humanity. If you have not the courage to tell your wife that your estate cannot bear fresh encumbrances, new loans, and new debts ——"

"Hush!" said Martin, cautiously.

"Then, I say, let me prevent the casualty, that's all."

"How are you, Scanlan?" said Martin, as the attorney came, bowing and smiling, forward to pay his respects. "My friend, Mr. Repton, wishes to make your acquaintance."

"I have the honour of being known to Mr. Repton, already, sir, if he has not forgotten me."

"Eh—how? where?" cried the lawyer, sharply.

"In Reeves *versus* Dockery and another, sir, in Hilary, 24. It was *I* supplied the instructions ——"

"To be sure—perfectly right. Maurice Scanlan; isn't that the name? You did the thing well, sir; and if we failed, we retreated without dishonour."

"That was a grand shot you fired at the Bench, sir, when all was over," said Scanlan. "I don't suppose they ever got such a complete 'set down' before."

"I forget it," said Repton, but with a bright twinkle of his eye which more than contradicted his words.

"Then sir, it's more than their lordships ever will," said Scanlan. "The Chief Baron it was," said he, addressing Martin, "that overruled every objection made by Counsellor Repton, and at last declared that he wouldn't hear any more citations whatsoever. 'But I have a stronger case still, my lord,' says the counsellor. 'I'll not hear it, sir,' said the Court. 'It is in Crewe and Fust, Term Reports, page 1438.'

"'I don't care where it is, sir,' was the answer.

"'In a charge delivered by Lord Eldon ——'

"'Oh, let us hear my Lord Eldon,' said Plumridge, the Puisne Judge, who was rather ashamed of the Chief Baron's severity. 'Let us hear my Lord Eldon.'

"'Here it is, my lords,' said the counsellor, opening the volume, and laying his hand upon the page, 'Crewe and Fust's Pleas of the Crown, page 1438. My Lord Eldon says: "I may here observe the Courts of Law in Ireland are *generally* wrong! The Court of Exchequer is *always* wrong!"'"

Repton tried to smother his own delighted laugh at the reminiscence, but all in vain, it burst from him long and joyously; and as he shook Scanlan's hand, he said, "The incident loses nothing by your telling, sir; you have done it admirable justice."

"You make me very proud indeed, counsellor," said Scanlan, who really did look overjoyed at the speech.

"Have you any news for us, Scanlan?" said Martin, as they entered the library.

"Yes, sir; the Ministry is out."

"We know that already, man!"

"And the Marquis of Reckington comes here as Lord-Lieutenant."

"That we know also."

"Colonel Massingbred to be Chief Sec ——

"Moore Massingbred!" cried both in a breath.

"Yes, sir; he that was a Treasury Lord."

"Are you quite sure of this, Scanlan?" asked Martin.

"I had it from Groves, sir, at the Castle, yesterday morning, who told me there would be an immediate dissolution; and showed me a list of government candidates."

"You may talk them all over together, then," said Martin, "for I'm heartily tired of politics this morning." And, so saying, he left them.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STUDIO.

It is one of the most inestimable privileges of Art, that amidst all the cares and contentions of the world, amidst strife, and war, and carnage, its glorious realm is undisturbed, its peace unbroken, and its followers free to follow their own wayward fancies, without let or hinderance. Your great practical intelligencies—your men of committees, and corn, and railroads, and ship-canals—sneer at the fictitious life, for so does it seem to them, of the mere painter or musician. They have a sort of pitying estimate for capacities only exercised upon the ideal, and look down with a very palpable contempt upon those whose world is a gallery or an orchestra. After all, this division of labour is a wise and happy provision, carrying with it many and varied benefits, and making of that strange edifice of mankind a far more pleasing and harmonious structure than we should otherwise have seen it. The imagination is to the actual, in the world of active life, what flowers are to nutritious herbs and roots. It is the influence that adorns, elevates, and embellishes existence. That such gifts have been confided to certain individuals is in itself a sufficient evidence, just as we see in the existence of flowers, that pleasure has its place assigned in the grand scheme of creation, and that the happiness which flows from gratified sense has not been denied us.

In that petty world which lived beneath the roof of Cro' Martin Castle, all the eager passions and excitements of political intrigue were now at work. My lady was full of plans for future greatness; Repton was scheming, and suggesting, and thwarting everybody in turn; and even Martin himself, engulphed in the "Maëlstrom" of the crisis, was roused into a state of semi-preparation that amounted to a condition of almost fever. As for Massingbred, whatever he really did feel, his manner affected a most consummate indifferance to all that went forward; nor did the mention of his father's appointment to high office elicit from him anything beyond a somewhat contemptuous opinion of the new party in power. While, therefore, secret councils were held, letters read and written, conferences conducted in every room, one little space was devoid of all these embarrassments and anxieties, and that was an oval chamber, lighted from the top, and originally destined for a summer ball-room, but now appropriated to Mr. Crow's use for the completion of the Grand Historical, which had lately been transferred from Kilkieran to its place there.

The unlucky masterpiece was doomed to many a difficulty. The great events in prospect had totally banished all thought of "art" from Lady Dorothea's mind. The fall of a recent administration was a far more imminent circumstance than the abdication of a king a few centuries back. Martin of course had enough on his head, without the cares of mock royalty. Mary was overwhelmed with occupations; the floods, and a threatened famine were casualties not to be overlooked, and she was absent every day from dawn to late night; while, to complete the list of defaulters, young Nelligan—the future Prince of Orange of the picture—was gone!

Men deplore their past youth, their bygone buoyancy of heart, their old loves and extinct friendships, but of all departed pleasures, there is a peculiar poignancy about one, and that is an artist's grief over a "lost sitter." You ladies and gentlemen whose thumbs have never closed on a palette, nor whose fingers have never felt the soft influence of varnish, may smile at such a sorrow, but take my word for it, it is a real and tangible affliction.

The waving locks, the noble brow, the deep square orbits, and the finely-cut chin, are but the subtle suggestions out of which inspirations are begotten and poetic visions nurtured. The graceful bearing and the noble port, the tender melancholy or the buoyant gladness, have each in turn struck some chord of secret feeling in the artist's breast, revealing to him new ideas of beauty, and imparting that creative power which displays itself in new combinations.

Poor Simmy Crow was not a Titian nor a Vandyke, but unhappily the sorrows of genius are very often experienced by those who are not gifted with its greatness, and the humble aspirant of excellence can catch every malady to which the triumphant in all the wild enthusiasm of his powers is exposed. He sat down before his canvas, as some general might before a fortified town, which had resisted all his efforts of attack. He was depressed and discouraged.

The upper part of the young student's head was already half finished, and there was enough done to impart a kind of promise of success, that glorious vista which opens itself so often in imagination to those whose world is but their own fancy. He half thought he could finish it from memory, but before he had proceeded many minutes, he laid down the brush in despair. It seemed like a fatality that something must always interpose to bar the road to success. One time it was sickness, then, it was poverty, a disparaging criticism had even done it; and now, when none of these threatened, there arose a new impediment. "Ah! Simmy, Simmy," he exclaimed aloud, ' you were born under an unkindly planet. That's the secret of it all!"

"I confess I cannot concur in that opinion," said a low, soft voice behind him. He started up and beheld Kate Henderson, who, leaning on the back of a chair, continued to gaze steadfastly at the canvas, perfectly regardless of his astonishment. "There is a great deal to admire in that picture!" said she, as though talking to herself.

Simmy crept stealthily back and stationed himself behind her, as if to hear her remarks, while viewing the picture from the same point.

"You have grouped your figures admirably," continued she, now addressing him, "and your management of the light shows a study of Rembrandt."

"Very true, ma'am—miss, I mean. I have copied nearly all his great pieces."

"And the drapery—that robe of the King's—tells me that you have studied another great master of colour; am I right, sir, in saying Paul Veronese?"

Simmy Crow's face glowed till it became crimson, while his eyes sparkled with intense delight.

"Oh dear me!" he exclaimed, "isn't it too much happiness to hear this, and only a minute ago I was in black despair!"

"Mine is very humble criticism, sir, but as I have seen good pictures ——"

"Where? In the galleries abroad?" broke in Crow, hurriedly.

"All over Germany and Italy. I travelled with those who really cared for and understood art. But to come back to yours—that head is a noble study."

"And that's exactly what I'm grieving over; he's gone."

"Young Mr. Nelligan?"

"Himself; he started this morning for Oughterard."

"But probably to return in a day or two."

Crow looked stealthily around to see if he were not likely to be overheard, and then, approaching Kate, said in a whisper,

"I don't think he'll ever cross the doors again."

"How so? has he received any offence?"

"I can't make out what it is," said Simmy, with a puzzled look, "but he came to my room late last night, and sat down without saying a word; and at last, when I questioned him if he were ill, he said suddenly,

"'Have you found, Mr. Crow, that in your career as an artist, you have been able to withdraw yourself sufficiently from the ordinary events of life as to make up a little world of your own, wherein you lived indifferent to passing incidents?'

"'Yes,' said I, 'I have, whenever I was doing anything really worth the name.'

"'And at such times,' said he again, 'you cared nothing, or next to nothing, for either the flatteries or the sarcasms of those around you?'

"'I couldn't mind them,' said I, 'for I never so much as heard them.'

"'Exactly what I mean,' said he, rapidly. 'Intent upon higher ambitions, you were above the petty slights of malice or envy, and with your own goal before you, were steeled against the minor casualties of the journey. Then why should not I also enjoy the immunity? Can I not summon to my aid a pride like this, or am I to be discouraged and disgraced to my own heart by a mere impertinence?'

"I stared at him, not guessing what he could mean.

"'Rather quit the spot with which it is associated—quit it for ever,' muttered he to himself, as he paced the room, while his face grew deathly pale.

"'As for me,' said I, for I wanted to say something—anything, in short—just to take his attention a little off of himself, 'whenever the world goes hard with me, I just step into my studio, lock the door, and sit down before a fresh canvas. I throw in a bit of brown, with a dash of bluish grey over it—half sky, half atmosphere, and I daub away till something like an effect—maybe a sunset, maybe a sullen-looking sea-shore, maybe a long, low prairie swell rises before me. I don't try for details, I don't even trace an outline, but just throw in an effect here and there, and by good luck it often comes right, in some fine harmony of colour, that's sure to warm up my heart and cheer my spirits; for, as there are sounds that, swelling up, fill the whole nature of man with ecstasy, there are combinations of colour and tint that enter the brain by the eye, and just produce the same sense of delight.'"

"And how did he accept your consolation?" asked she, smiling good-naturedly.

"I don't well know if he listened to me," said Simmy, sorrowfully; "for all he said afterwards was,

"'Well, Mr. Crow, good-by. I hope you'll come to see me when you visit Dublin. You'll easily find out my chambers in the college.'

"Of course I said 'I'd be delighted;' and there we parted."

"Poor fellow!" said Kate, but in an accent so peculiar it would have been very difficult to pronounce whether the words were of kindness or of disparagement.

"And your Prince, Mr. Crow?" said she, changing her tone to one of real or affected interest; "what's to be done now that Mr. Nelligan has left us?"

"I'm thinking of making a background figure of him, miss," said Simmy. "Burnt sienna reduces many an illustrious individual to an obscure position."

"But why not ask Mr. Massingbred to take his place—you've seen him?"

"Only passing the window, miss. He is a handsome young man, but that same look of fashion, the dash of style about him, is exactly what destroys the face for *me*. I feel I could make nothing of it; I'd be always thinking of him standing inside the plate-glass window of a London Club, or cantering along the alleys of the Park, or sipping his iced lemonade at Tortoni's. There's no poetising your man of gold chains and embroidered waistcoats!"

"I half suspect you are unjust in this case," said she, with one of her dubious smiles.

"I'm only saying what the effect is upon myself, miss," said Crow.

"But why not make a compromise between the two?" said she. "I believe the great painters—Vandyke, certainly—rarely took the studies from a single head. They caught a brow here, and a mouth there, harmonising the details by the suggestions of their own genius. Now, what if preserving all this here"—and she pointed to the head and eyes—"you were to fill up the remainder, partly from imagination, partly from a study." And as she spoke she took the brush from his hand, and by a few light and careless touches imparted a new character to the face.

"Oh, go on; that's admirable—that's glorious!" exclaimed Crow, wild with delight.

"There is no necessity to lose the expression of haughty sorrow in the eye and brow," continued she; "nor does it interfere with the passing emotion he may be supposed unable to control, of proud contempt for that priestly influence which has dominated over the ambition of a king." And now, as though carried away by the theme, she continued to paint as rapidly as she spoke, while Crow busied himself in preparing the colours upon the palette.

"My hardihood is only intended to encourage you, Mr. Crow," said she, "by showing that if one like me can point the road, the journey need not be deemed a difficult one." As she retired some paces to contemplate the picture, she casually glanced through a low glass door which opened upon the lawn, and where, under the shelter of a leafy beech, a young country girl was standing; her blue cloth cloak, with the hood thrown over her head, gave a certain picturesque character to the figure, which nearer inspection more than confirmed, for her features were singularly fine, and her large, soft, blue eyes beamed with a gentle earnestness, that showed Kate she was there with a purpose.

Opening the door at once, Kate Henderson approached her, and asked what she wanted.

With an air of half pride, half shame, the country girl drew herself up, and stared full and steadfastly at the speaker, and so continued till Kate repeated her question.

"Sure you're not Miss Mary?" replied she, by questioning her in turn.

"No, but if I can be of any use to you ——"

"I don't think you can," broke she in, with a manner almost haughty; "it's somebody else I'm wanting."

"If you wish to see Miss Martin, I'll go and fetch her," said Kate.

"I didn't say it was her I wanted to see," replied she, with a calm and almost severe composure.

"Maybe her ladyship?" asked Kate, far more interested than repelled by the other's manner.

"It's none of them at all," rejoined she. "I came here to speak to one that I know myself," added she, after a long pause; "and if he isn't gone, I want to see him."

"Oh, I think I can guess now," said Kate, smiling. "It is the counsellor from Dublin, Mr. Repton."

"It is no such thing," said the girl, promptly.

"Then it must be Mr. Crow, here."

An indignant toss of the head gave the negative to this surmise.

"I have gone through all our names here," said Kate; "and except Mr. Massingbred——"

"And there's the very one I want," said the girl, boldly.

"Step in here and rest yourself, and I'll send for him," said Kate, and with such persuasive courtesy were the words uttered, that almost, as it seemed, against her very will, the girl followed her into the studio and sat down. While Mr. Crow proceeded in search of Massingbred, Kate Henderson, resuming brush and palette, returned to her painting; not, however, on the grand canvas of the "Historical," but dexterously interposing a piece of fresh board, she seized the opportunity to sketch the beautiful head then before her, while occupying the girl's attention with the objects around.

Notwithstanding her intense astonishment at all she saw, the country girl never uttered a word, nor vouchsafed a single question as to the paintings; she even tried to moderate the eager pleasure they afforded by an endeavour not to admire them. Touched by the native pride of this struggle—for struggle it was—the features had assumed a look of haughty composure that well became the character of her beauty, and Kate caught up the expression so rapidly, that her sketch was already well-nigh completed when Massingbred entered.

"My dear Mistress Joan," cried he, shaking her cordially by both hands, "how glad I am to see you again. It was but this very moment I was inquiring how I could go over and pay you a visit."

Hurriedly as these words were uttered, and in all the apparent fervour of hearty sincerity, they were accompanied by a short glance at Kate Henderson, who was about to leave the room, that plainly said, "Remain where you are; there is no mystery here."

"I thank yer honer kindly," said Joan Landy, "but it's no good coming, he isn't there."

"Not there!—how and why is that?"

"Sure *you* ought to know better than *me*," said she, fixing her large eyes full upon him. "Ye left the house together, and *he* never came back since."

"Oh, perhaps I can guess," said Jack, pausing for a moment to reflect. "He might have deemed it safer to keep out of the way for a day or two."

"It's no good deceivin' me, sir," said she, rising from her seat; "tell me the whole truth. Where is he?"

"That is really more than I can say, my dear Mistress Joan. We parted in Oughterard."

"And you never saw him after?"

"Never, I assure you."

"And you never tried to see him?—you never asked what became of him?"

"I concluded, indeed I was certain, that he returned home," said Jack, but not without some confusion.

"Ay, that was enough for you," said she, angrily. "If you were a poor labourin' man, you'd not desert him that had you under his roof and gave you the best he had; but because ye're a gentleman ——"

"It is precisely for that reason I can't suffer you to think so meanly of me," cried Jack. "Now just hear me for one moment, and you'll see how unjust you've been." And, drawing his chair closer to hers, he narrated in a low and whispering voice the few events of their morning at Oughterard, and read for her the short note Magennis had written to him.

"And is that all?" exclaimed Joan, when he concluded.

"All, upon my honour!" said he, solemnly.

"Oh, then, wirra! wirra!" said she, ringing her hands, sorrowfully, "why did I come here?—why didn't I bear it all patient? But sure my heart was bursting, and I could not rest nor sleep, thinking of what happened to him! Oh, yer honer knows well what he is to *me!*" And she covered her face with her hands.

"You have done nothing wrong in coming here," said Jack, consolingly.

"Not if he never hears of it," said she, in a voice tremulous with fear.

"That he need never do," rejoined Jack; "though I cannot see why he should object to it. But come, Mrs. Joan, don't let this fret you; here's a young lady will tell you, as I have, that nobody could possibly blame your natural anxiety."

"What would a young lady know about a poor creature like *me?*" exclaimed Joan, dejectedly. "Sure, from the day she's born, she never felt what it was to be all alone and friendless!"

"You little guess to whom you say that," said Kate, turning round and gazing on her calmly; "but if the balance were struck this minute, take my word for it, you'd have the better share of fortune."

Jack Massingbred's cheek quivered slightly as he heard these words, and his eyes were bent upon the speaker with an intense meaning. Kate, however, turned haughtily away from the gaze, and coldly reminded him that Mrs. Joan should have some refreshment after her long walk.

"No, miss—no, yer honer; many thanks for the same," said Joan, drawing her cloak around her, "I couldn't eat a bit—my heart's heavy inside me. I'll go back now."

Kate tried to persuade her to take something, or at least to rest a little longer, but she was resolute, and eager to return.

"Shall we bear you company part of the way, then?" said Jack, with a look of half entreaty towards Kate.

"I shall be but too happy," said Kate, while she turned the nearly-completed sketch to the wall, but not so rapidly as to prevent Massingbred's catching a glimpse of it.

"How like!" exclaimed he, but only in a whisper audible to himself. "I didn't know that this also was one of your accomplishments."

A little laugh, and a saucy motion of her head was all her reply, while she went in search of her bonnet and shawl. She was back again in a moment, and the three now issued forth into the wood.

For all Jack Massingbred's boasted "tact," and his assumed power of suiting himself to his company, he felt very ill at ease as he walked along that morning. "His world" was not that of the poor country girl at his side, and he essayed in vain to find some topic to interest her. Not so Kate Henderson. With all a woman's nice perception, and quite without effort, she talked to Joan about the country and the people, of whose habits she knew sufficient not to betray ignorance; and although Joan felt at times a half suspicious distrust of her, she grew at length to be pleased with the tone of easy familiarity used towards her, and the absence of anything bordering on superiority.

Joan, whose instincts and sympathies were all with the humble class from which she sprung, described in touching language the suffering condition of the people, the terrible struggle against destitution maintained for years, and daily becoming more difficult and hopeless. It was like a shipwrecked crew reduced to quarter-rations, and now about to relinquish even these!

"And they are patient under all this?" asked Kate, with that peculiar accent so difficult to pronounce its meaning.

"They are indeed, miss," was the answer.

"Have they any hope? What do they promise themselves as the remedy for these calamities?"

"Sorrow one of me knows," said she, with a sigh. "Some goes away to America, some sinks slowly under it, and waits for God's time to leave the world, and a few, but very few, gets roused to anger, and does something to be transported or put in gaol."

"And Miss Martin—does she not relieve a good deal of this misery? Is she not of immense benefit by her exertions here?"

"Arrah, what can a young lady do after all. Sure it's always them that talks most and best gets over her. Some are ashamed, and some are too proud to tell what they're suffering; and I believe in my heart, for one that's relieved there are twenty more angry at seeing how lucky he was."

They walked along now for some time in silence, when Joan, stopping short, said—"There's the house, miss; that's the place I live in."

"That house far away on the mountain side?"

"Yes, miss; it's four miles yet from this."

"But surely you haven't to walk all that way?"

"What signifies it? Isn't my heart lighter than when I came along this morning? And now I won't let you come any farther, for I'll take a short cut here across the fields."

"May I go and see you one of these days?" asked Kate.

Joan grew crimson to the very roots of her hair, and turned a look on Massingbred, as though to say—"You ought to answer this for me." But Jack was too deep in his own thoughts even to notice the appeal.

"I can scarcely ask *you* to come to *me*," said Kate, quickly perceiving a difficulty, "for I'm not even a visitor at Cro' Martin."

"I'm sure I hope it's not the last time we'll meet, miss; but maybe"—she faltered, and a heavy tear burst forth, and rolled slowly along her cheek—"maybe you oughtn't to come and see me."

Kate pressed her hand affectionately, without speaking, and they parted.

"Is Joan gone" asked Massingbred, raising his head from an attitude of deep reverie. "When did she leave us?"

"There she goes yonder," said Kate, pointing. "I fear me her spirits are not as light as her footsteps. Are her people very poor?"

"Her father was a herd, I believe," said he, carelessly; "but she doesn't live at home."

"Is she married, then?"

"I'm not sure that she is; but at least she believes that she is."

"Poor thing!" said Kate, calmly, while, folding her arms, she continued to gaze after the departing figure of the country girl. "Poor thing!" repeated she once more, and turned to walk homewards.

Massingbred fixed his eyes upon her keenly as she uttered the words; few and simple as they were, they seemed to reveal to him something of the nature of her who spoke them. A mere exclamation—a syllable—will sometimes convey "whole worlds of secret thought and feeling," and it was evidently thus that Massingbred interpreted this brief expression. "There was nothing of scorn in that pity," thought he. "I wish she had uttered even one word more! She is a strange creature!"

And it was thus speaking to himself that he walked along at her side.

"This wild and desolate scene is not very like that of which we talked the other night—when first we met—Miss Henderson."

"You forget that we never met," said she, calmly.

"True, and yet there was a link between us even in those few flowers thrown at random."

"Don't be romantic, Mr. Massingbred—do not, I pray you," said she, smiling faintly. "You *know* it's not your style, while it would be utterly thrown away upon *me*. I am aware that fine gentlemen of your stamp deem this the fitting tone to assume towards 'the governess,' but I'm really unworthy of it."

"What a strange girl you are," said he, half thinking aloud.

"On the contrary, how very commonplace," said she, hastily.

"Do you like this country?" asked Massingbred, with an imitation of her own abrupt manner.

"No," said she, shortly.

"Nor the people?"

"Nor the people!" was the answer.

"And is your life to be passed amongst them?"

"Perhaps," said she, with a slight gesture of her shoulders. "Don't you know, Mr. Massingbred," added she, with more energy, "that a woman has no more power to shape her destiny than a leaf has to choose where it will fall? If I were a man—you, for instance—I would think and act differently."

"I should like to hear what you would do if in my place," said Jack, with a degree of deep interest in the remark.

"To begin, I'll tell you what I would not do," said she, firmly. "I'd not waste very good abilities on very small objects; I'd neither have small ambitions, nor small animosities. You have both."

"As how?" asked he, frankly, and with no touch of irritation.

"Am I to be candid?"

"Certainly."

"Even to rudeness?"

"Cut as deeply as you like," said he, smiling.

"Then here goes:—For the 'small ambition' I speak of, it was displayed yesterday at dinner, when, in rivalry with that old lawyer, you condescended to play agreeable, to out-talk him, out-quote, and out-anecdote him. It is true you succeeded, but what a poor success it was; how inadequate to the forces that were mustered to effect it!"

"And now for the other count of the indictment," said he, with a half smile.

"First, do you plead guilty to this one?" asked she.

"Yes; with an 'attenuating circumstance.'"

"What is that?"

"Why, that *you* were present," said Jack, with a glance of more than mere passing gallantry.

"Well," said she, after a pause, "I *did* take some of the display to my own share. I saw that you didn't care to captivate the young lady of the house, and that 'my lady' bored you."

"Insufferably!" exclaimed Jack, with energy.

"Your manner showed it," said she, "even more than such polish ought to have betrayed."

"But I'm sure I never exhibited any signs of my martyrdom," said he; "I stood my torture well."

"Not half so heroically as you fancied. I noticed your weariness before the dinner was half over, as I detected your splenetic dislike to young Mr. Nelligan——"

"To young Nelligan?—then he has told you——"

"Stop—be cautious," broke she in hurriedly; "don't turn evidence against yourself. *He* has told me nothing."

"Then what do you know?"

"Nothing; I only surmise."

"And what is your surmise?"

"That he and you had met before—that you had even been intimate—and now, from some misunderstanding, you had ceased to be friends. Mind, I don't want confessions—I don't seek to learn your secrets."

"But you shall hear this from me," said Massingbred, with earnestness, "and perhaps you, so ready to blame me for some things, may see reason to think well of me in this." He then related, briefly but simply, the history of his acquaintance with Nelligan; he dwelt, not without feeling, upon the passages of their student-life, and at last spoke of his chance visit to Oughterard, and the accident by which he became old Nelligan's guest. "What can you make of Joseph's conduct," cried he, "or how explain his refusal to meet me at his father's table? One of two reasons there must be. He either discredits me in the character of his friend, or shrinks, with an ignoble shame, from appearing there in his real position—the son of the country shopkeeper! I scarcely know if I'd not prefer he should have been actuated by the former motive; though more offensive to *me*, in *him* it were more manly."

"Why not have asked him which alternative he accepted?" asked Kate.

"Because the opportunity to wound him deeply—incurably—first presented itself. I knew well that nothing would hurt him like the cool assumption of not recognizing him, and I determined not to lose my vengeance."

"I'm a woman," said Kate, "and I'd not have stooped to *that!*"

It was rarely that Massingbred's emotions gave any evidence of their working, but now his cheek grew crimson, as he said, "A man can only measure a man's indignation."

"You are angry without cause," said she, calmly; "you wish me to pronounce a verdict on an act, and are displeased because I think differently from you. How right I was in my guess that small animosities were amongst your failings! You want now to quarrel with *me!*"

Massingbred walked along for some moments without speaking, and then said, "You knew Nelligan formerly?"

"Yes, we were playfellows together as children; lovers, I believe, a little later on ——"

"And now?" broke he in.

"And now very good friends, as the world uses that phrase. At all events," added she, after a brief pause, "enough his friend to be able to say that you have wronged him by your suspicions. Joe Nelligan—or I'm much mistaken—may feel the inequality of his position as a something to overcome, a barrier to be surmounted—not as a disability to contest the prizes of life even with such as Mr. Massingbred."

"It is *you* now would quarrel with *me*," said Jack, retorting her own words upon her. "And yet," he added, in a lower tone, "I would wish to have you my friend."

"So you can, upon one condition," replied she, promptly.

"I accept, whatever it be. Name it."

"That you be your own friend, that you address yourself to the business of life seriously and steadily; resolving to employ your abilities as a means of advancement, not as a mere instrument for amusement; determine, in fact, to be something besides a *dilettante* and an idler."

"Is it a bargain, then, if I do this?" asked he, eagerly.

"Yes; I promise you the high and mighty boon of *my* friendship," replied she, with mock solemnity.

"And so we seal our contract," said he, pressing her hand to his lips, but with an air of such respectful gallantry, that the action implied nothing bordering on a liberty.

"And now I leave you," said she, as she opened the wicket-gate of a small flower-garden; "such conferences as ours must not be repeated, or they might be remarked upon. Good-by." And without waiting for his reply, she passed on into the garden, while Massingbred stood gazing after her silently and thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XX.

AN ELECTION ADDRESS.

"AM I behind time, Mr. Massingbred?" said Kate Henderson, as she entered the Library, about a week after the events we have last recorded—"am I behind time?" said she, approaching a table where the young man sat, surrounded with a mass of letters and papers.

"Not very much," said he, rising, and placing a chair for her; "and I take it for granted you came as soon as you could."

"Yes; I have finished my morning's reading for her Ladyship—noted her letters—answered the official portion of her correspondence—talked the newspaper for Mr. Martin—hummed a singing lesson for Miss Mary—listened to a Grand Jury story of Mr. Repton—and now, that they are all off to their several destinations, here I am, very much at the service of Mr. Massingbred."

"Who never needed counsel more than at this moment!" said Jack, running his hands distractedly through his hair. "That's from my father!" added he, handing her a letter with a portentious-looking seal attached to it.

"What a fine bold hand—and how easy to read," said she, perusing it. Jack watched her narrowly while she read; but on her calm impassive face not a line nor a lineament betrayed emotion.

"It is, then, an English borough he recommends," said she, laying it down; "and I suppose, looking to an official career, he is quite right. The 'No Irish need apply' might be inscribed over Downing-street; but is that altogether your view?"

"I scarcely know what I project as yet," said he. "I have no career!"

"Well, let us plan one," replied she, crossing her arms on the table, and speaking with increased earnestness. "The Martins have offered you Oughterard——" He nodded, and she went on: "And, as I understand it, very much on *your* own conditions?"

"That is to say, I'm not to damage the Tories more than I can help, nor to help the Radicals more than I must."

"Is there any designation for the party you will thus belong to?" asked she.

"I'm not exactly sure that there is; perhaps they'd call me a Moderate Whig."

"That sounds very nice and commonplace, but I don't like it. These are not times for moderation, nor would the part suit *you!*"

"You think so?"

"I'm certain of it. You haven't got habits of discipline to serve with a regular corps; to do anything, or be anything, you must command a partisan legion——"

"You're right there—I know that," broke he in.

"I don't mean it as flattery, but rather something a little bordering on the reverse," said she, fixing her eyes steadfastly on him; "for, after all, there is no great success—I mean, no towering success—to be achieved by such a line; but as I feel that you'll not work——"

"No; of that be assured!"

"Then there are only secondary rewards to be won."

"You certainly do not over-estimate me!" said Jack, trying to seem perfectly indifferent.

"I have no desire to underrate your abilities," said she, calmly; "they are very good ones. You have great fluency—great 'variety,' as Grattan would call it—an excellent memory—and a most amiable self-possession."

"By Jove!" said he, reddening slightly, "you enumerate my little gifts with all the accuracy of an appraiser!"

"Then," resumed she, not heeding his interruption, "you have abundance of what is vulgarly styled 'pluck,' and which is to courage what esprit is to actual wit; and lastly, you are a proficient in that readiness which the world always accepts for frankness."

"You were right to say that you intended no flattery!" said he, with an effort to laugh.

"I want to be truthful," rejoined she, calmly. "No praise of mine—however high it soared, or however lavishly it was squandered—could possibly raise you in your own esteem. The

Governess may perform the part of the slave in the triumphal chariot, but could not aspire to put the crown on the conqueror!"

"But I have not conquered!" said Jack.

"You may, whenever you enter the lists; you must, indeed, if you only care to do so. Go in for an Irish borough," said she, with renewed animation; "arm yourself with all the popular grievances—there is just faction enough left to last *your* time; discuss them in your own way, and my word for it but you'll succeed. It will be such a boon to the House to hear a gentlemanlike tone on questions which have always been treated in coarser guise. For a while you'll have no imitators, and can sneer at the gentry and extol the 'people,' without a competitor. Now and then, too, you can assail the Treasury benches, where your father is sitting; and nothing will so redound to your character for independence."

"Why, where in Heaven's name," cried Jack, "have you got up all this? What and how do you know anything of party and politics?"

"Have I not been studying 'Hansard' and the files of the *Times* for the last week by your directions? Have I not read lives of all the illustrious prosers you gave me to look through? And is it very wonderful if I have learned some of the secrets of this success, or that I should 'get up' 'my politics' as rapidly as you can 'your principles?'"

"I wish I was even sure that I had done so," said Jack, laughing, "for this same address is puzzling me sadly! Now here, for instance," and he read aloud, "'While steadfastly upholding the rights of property, determined to maintain in all their integrity the more sacred rights of conscience——.' Now just tell me, what do you understand by that?"

"That rents must be paid—occasionally, at least; but that you hope to pull down the Established Church!"

"Well—come," said he, "the thing will perhaps do!"

"I don't much like all this about 'the Palladium of the British Constitution, and the unbroken bulwark of our dearest liberties.' We are in Ireland, remember, where we care no more for your Palladium—if we ever knew what it meant—than we do for 'Grand Lama.' A slight dash of what is called 'nationality' would be better—very vague—very shadowy, of course. Bear in mind what Lady Dorothea told us last night about the charm of the King's bow. Everybody thought it specially meant for himself; it strikes me that something of this sort should pervade an election address."

"I wish to Heaven you'd write it, then," said Jack, placing a pen in her fingers.

"Something in this fashion," said she, while her hands traced the lines rapidly on the paper:

"'Finding that a new era is about to dawn in the political state of Ireland, when the consequences of late legislation will engender new conditions and relations, I present myself before you to solicit the honour of your suffrages, a perfect stranger to your town, but no stranger to the wants and necessities of that nationality which now, for the first time for centuries, is about to receive its due development.'

"Or this, if you prefer it," said she, writing away rapidly as before:

"'The presumption of aspiring to your representation will, perhaps, be compensated when I come before you deeply impressed with the wrongs which centuries of legislation have enacted, and which, stranger as I am in Ireland, have arrested my attention and engaged my sympathies, impelling me to enter upon a public career, and, if favoured by your approval, to devote whatever energy and capacity I may possess, to your great and good cause.'"

"I like the first best," said Jack. "The new era and the results of the Relief Bill will be such appetising suggestions. There must be an allusion to the Martins and their support."

"Rather, however, as though *you* had brought over Martin to *your* views, than that *he* had selected you to represent his. In this wise:" and again she wrote—

"'It is with a just pride that I announce to you that in these professions I am strengthened by the cordial approval and support of one who, in his rank and station, and natural influence, is second to none in this great county; and, who, whatever misconceptions have hitherto prevailed as to his views, is, heart and soul, a true patriot and an Irishman!'

"It will puzzle him sorely to guess what line he should adopt to realize all this, and he'll have to come to *you* for his politics!"

"You have caught up the cant of this peculiar literature perfectly," said Massingbred, as he pored over the papers she had just penned.

"Dear me!" cried she, in a weary tone, "my great difficulty will be to discard its evil influence, and even write a common note like a reasonable being again."

"But come, confess frankly: you think that a political career is the only one worth embracing, and that any other life offers no reward worthy the name?"

"I think you mistake me," said she. "It is the social position consequent upon success in a political life that I value—the eminence it confers in the very highest and greatest circles. If I regarded the matter otherwise, I'd not be indifferent as to the line to follow—I'd have great convictions, and hold them—I mean, if I were *you*."

"Then of course you consider me as one who has none such?"

"To be sure I do. Men of your measures of ability can no more burden themselves with principles than a thorough-bred hackney can carry extra weight—they've quite enough to do to make their running without."

"Well, I shall certainly not be spoiled by flattery, at least from you," said Jack, laughing.

"They who know you less will make up for it all, depend upon it," said she, quietly. "Don't fancy, Mr. Massingbred," added she, with more earnestness of manner—"don't fancy that I'm insensible to the impertinences I have dared to address to you, or that I venture upon them without pain: but when I perceived that you would admit me to the liberty of criticising your conduct, character, and manners, I thought that I might render you good service by saying what better taste and better breeding would shrink from, and the only cost be the dislike of myself."

"You took a very bad way to accomplish the latter," said Jack, fervently.

"I didn't give it much consideration," said she, haughtily. "It was very little matter what opinion you entertained of 'the governess.'"

"I should like to convince you that you were wrong," said he, looking fixedly at her.

"You'd find your task harder than you suspect, sir," said she, coldly. "There is a sense of pride about the humbleness of a station such as mine, as all the elevation of one in yours, could never fathom. And," added she, in a still more determined tone, "there is but one condition on which this intercourse of ours can continue, which is, that this topic be never resumed between us. The gulf that separates your position in life from mine is the security for mutual frankness; to attempt to span it over by deception would be to build a bridge that must break down the first moment of its trial. Enough of this! I'll take these," said she, gathering up the papers, "and copy them out clearly. They ought to be with the printer to-morrow; and, indeed, you should not defer your canvass."

Massingbred made no answer, but sat with his head buried between his hands.

"I'd have you to visit the 'dear constituency' at once, Mr. Massingbred," said she, with a slight touch of scorn in her voice. "They are not well-bred enough to bear a slight!" And with this she left the room.

"I should like excessively to know the secret of this interest in my behalf," said Jack, as he arose and slowly walked the room. "It is not, unquestionably, from any high estimate of my capacity; as little is it anything bordering on regard; and yet," added he, after a pause, "there are moments when I half fancy she could care for me, at least I know well that *I* could for *her*. Confound it!" cried he, passionately, "what a terrible barrier social station throws up! If she were even some country squire's daughter—portionless as she is—the notion would not be so absurd; but 'the governess!' and 'the steward!' what frightful figures to conjure up. No, no; that's impossible. One might do such a folly by retiring from the world for ever, but that would be exactly to defeat the whole object of such a match. She is essentially intended for 'the world'—every gift and grace she possesses are such as only have their fitting exercise—where the game of life is played by the highest, and for the heaviest stakes! But it is not to be thought of!"

"Have I found you at last?" cried Repton, entering the room. "They say the writ will be here on Monday, so that we've not an hour to lose. Let us drive over to Oughterard at once, see the editor of the *Intelligence*, call on priest Rafferty, and that other fellow—the father of our young friend here."

"Mr. Nelligan," said Jack. "But I can't well visit *him*—there have been some rather unpleasant passages between us."

"Ah! you told me something about it. He wanted you to fill a bail-bond, or do something or other, rather than shoot *me*. An unreasonable old rascal! Never mind; we shall come before him now in another character, and you'll see that he'll be more tractable."

"The matter is graver than this," said Jack, musingly; "and our difference is serious enough to make intercourse impossible."

"You shall tell me all about it as we drive along—that is, if it be brief and easy to follow, for my head is so full of election matters I don't desire a new element of complication. Step in now, and let us away." And with this he hurried Massingbred to the door, where a pony-phaeton was in waiting for them.

Once on the road, Repton changed the conversation from the domain of politics, and talked entirely of the host and his family. There was a sort of constitutional frankness and familiarity about the old lawyer which all the astute habits and instincts of his profession had never mastered. Like a great many acute men, his passion for shrewd observation and keen remark overbore the prudent reserve that belongs to less animated talkers, and so, he now scrupled not to discuss Martin and his affairs to one who but a few days back had been a complete stranger amongst them.

At first Jack heard him without much interest, but, as he continued, the subject attracted all his attention, full as it was of views of life and the world, perfectly new and strange to him.

To Massingbred's great astonishment, he learned that vast as the estates, and large as was the fortune of the Martins, that they were deeply encumbered with bond-debts and mortgages. The wasteful habits of the gentry generally, combined with great facilities for obtaining money at any emergency, had led to this universal indebtedness; and, in fact, as the lawyer expressed it, an old estate was supposed to be the victim of debt, as an elderly gentleman was liable to gout; nobody presuming to think that the tenure, in either case, was a whit the more precarious on account of the casualty.

"Now," said Repton, as they reached a point of the road from which a view of the country could be obtained for miles on every side—"now, as far as you can see belongs to Martin. Beyond that mountain yonder, too, there is a large tract—not very productive, it is true—extending to the sea. The fine waving surface to your left is all tillage land; and the islands in the bay are his. It is really a princely estate, with even greater hidden resources than those palpable and open to view. But, were I to show it to you on a map, and point out at the same time every spot on which some money-lender has a claim—how much has been advanced upon this—what sums have been lent upon that—you'd be more amazed at the careless ease of the proprietor than you now are at the extent of his fortune."

"But he is spending immensely in improving and developing the property," said Jack.

"Of course he is, sir. That new-fangled notion of 'gentleman-farming'—which has come to us from countries where there are no gentlemen—won't suit Ireland, at least in the present generation. What *we* want here is, not to make more money, but to learn how to spend less; and although the first very often teaches the last, it is a hard way for an Irishman to acquire his knowledge. There's your borough, sir—that little spot in the valley yonder is Oughterard. Do you feel, as you behold it, as though it were to be the mainspring of a great career? Is there an instinctive throb within that says, 'The Honourable Member for Oughterard will be a great name in the "Collective Wisdom?"'"

"I can scarcely say yes to that appeal," said Jack, smiling; "though if what you have just told me of the mediocrity of public men be true ——"

"Can you doubt it? You have them all before you—their lives, their sayings, and their doings. Show me one in the whole mass who has originated a new idea in politics, or developed a new resource in the nation. Do they exhibit the common inventiveness displayed in almost every other walk of life, or do they even dress up their common platitudes in any other garb than the cast-off clothes of their predecessors? Mediocrity is a flattery when applied to them. But what's this coming along behind us, with such clattering of hoofs?"

"A tandem, I think," said Jack, looking backward, "and very well handled, too."

"Oh, that illustrious attorney, Mr. Scanlan, I've no doubt. Let us draw up till he passes." And so saying, Repton moved to one side of the road, giving a wide space for the other to proceed on his way. Mr. Scanlan, however, had subdued his nags, by a low, soft whistle, to a half trot, when, giving the reins to his servant, he descended and advanced to the carriage. "I've been in pursuit of you, gentlemen," said he, touching his hat courteously, "for the last four miles, and I assure you you've given me a breathing heat of it. Mr. Martin requested me to hand you this note, sir," added he, addressing Repton, "which demands immediate attention."

The note was marked "instantaneous," and "strictly private," on the cover, and Repton opened it at once. It's contents were as follows:

"DEAR REP.,

"The post has just arrived, with intelligence that Harry is coming home—may be here within a week or so—so that we must not go on with our present plans for the borough, as H., of course, will stand. Come back, therefore, at once, and let us talk over the matter together.

"Yours, in haste,
"G. M."

"You know what this contains, perhaps?" said Repton, in a whisper to Scanlan. He nodded an assent, and the old lawyer re-read the note. "I don't see my way here quite clearly," added he, in the same subdued voice, to Scanlan.

"I'll stroll on and stretch my legs a bit," said Jack, springing out of the pony phaeton, and seeing that the others had some private matter of discussion; and Scanlan now drew nigh, while Repton informed him what the note contained.

"It's a little too late for this now," said Scanlan, gravely.

"How do you mean too late?" asked Repton.

"Why, that Massingbred stands well with the people in the borough. They think that he'll be more their man than Martin's, and indeed, they're so confident of it, I half suspect he has told them so."

"But there has been no canvass as yet—his address isn't even printed."

"There has been a correspondence, however," said Scanlan with a knowing wink. "Take my word for it, Mr. Repton, he's a deep fellow."

"Are you quite sure of this?—can you pledge yourself to its truth?"

"I only know that Father Rafferty said the night before last he was satisfied with him, and the one difficulty was about old Nelligan, who somehow is greatly incensed against Massingbred."

"He'd have no chance in the borough without us," said Repton, confidently.

"If old Dan would consent to spend the money, he'd be the Member in spite of us," rejoined Scanlan.

"I'll not dispute local knowledge with you, sir," said Repton, peevishly. "Let us turn back at once. Where's Mr. Massingbred? I saw him standing on the hill yonder a few minutes ago; maybe, he's strolling along the road in front." Repton moved forward to a rising spot of ground, from whence a wide view extended for a distance on every side, but no trace of Massingbred could be discovered. "What can have become of him?—has he turned towards Cro' Martin?" asked Repton.

"There he is," cried Scanlan, suddenly; "there he is, walking with Magennis. They're taking the short cut over the hills to Oughterard—that's unfortunate, too!"

"How so?"

"Why, before they're in the town they'll be as thick as two pickpockets—see how they're talking! I think, if I was to drive on, I'd catch them before they entered the town."

"Do so, then, Scanlan. Say that a sudden message from Mr. Martin recalled me, but that you'll drive him back with you to Cro' Martin."

"Am I to allude to the contents of the note, sir?"

"I think not; I opine it's best not to speak of it. Say, however, that something of importance has occurred at Cro' Martin, and suggest to him that the sooner he returns thither the better."

There was an amount of vacillation and uncertainty about Repton's manner as he uttered these few words that showed not only how gravely he regarded the crisis, but how totally unprepared he found himself for the emergency. Not so Scanlan, who took his seat once more on his lofty "buggy," and was soon spinning along the road at a pace of full twelve miles the hour.

As Repton drove back to Cro' Martin, he thought once, and not without humiliation, of his late lessons in statecraft to young Massingbred. "To fancy that I was instilling all these precepts at the very moment that he was countermining us. The young villain is a worthy son of his father! And how he will laugh at me, and make others laugh too. It will never do to drive him into opposition to us. Martin must consent to make the best of it, now, and accept him as his Member—for the present, at least. With time and good opportunity we can manage to trip up his heels, but, for the moment, there's no help for it." And with these not very consoling reflections he entered once more the grounds of Cro' Martin Castle.

Let us now turn to Massingbred, as, accompanied by Magennis, he walked at a rapid pace towards Oughterard. It needed but a glance at the figures, and the rate at which they moved, to see that these two men were bent upon an object.

"Don't you see the town now before you?" said Magennis. "It's not much above two miles, and by the road it is every step of six, or six and a half; and if we walk as we're doing now, we'll be there at least twenty minutes before them."

"But what will Repton think of my leaving him in this fashion?"

"That it was a bit of your usual eccentricity—no more," said the other, laughing.

"You are quite certain of what you've just told me?" asked Jack, after a pause.

"I tell you that you shall have it from Hosey's own lips. He showed the post-mark on the back of the letter to Father Rafferty, and it was 'Cape Town, August 24.' Now, as Hosey knows young Martin's writing as well as any man, what doubt can there be about it?"

"By that calculation," said Jack, thoughtfully, "he might be here within the present month!"

"Exactly what Father Neal said."

"A shrewd fellow that same Hosey must be to put things together in this fashion," said Jack. "Such a head as he has on his shoulders mightn't be a bad counsellor at this moment."

"Just come and talk to him, a bit," rejoined Magennis; "say you want to be trimmed about the whiskers, and he'll be a proud man to have you under his hand."

"And the committee are satisfied with my letter?" asked Jack.

"They are, and they are not; but, on the whole, they think it's a step in the right direction to get anything out of the Martins, and, as Father Neal remarks, 'where we can pass with our head, we can put our whole body through.'"

"But what's to be done about Nelligan? the breach with him is, I suspect, irreparable."

"Why, it was Nelligan himself moved the first resolution in the committee, that your address be accepted as embodying the views—he said the present views—of the liberal electors."

"You amaze me!" cried Massingbred; "and Joe, where was he?"

"Joe is off to Dublin; there's some examination or other he must attend. But old Dan is your friend, rely upon that."

"This is inexplicable," muttered Jack to himself.

"We'll go there, straight, the moment we get into the town. He'll take it as a great compliment; and you can talk to him frankly and openly, for old Dan is a man to be trusted."

"I wish I could guess at how this reconciliation has been effected," muttered Jack.

"It was your letter did it I think."

"But I never wrote one."

"Well, somebody else did, perhaps; at all events, Dan had an open letter in his hand when he addressed the committee, and said: 'After reading this, gentlemen,' said he, 'I can only say that I'll not oppose Mr. Massingbred; and if the free and independent men of Oughterard ask me who is the man to represent them, I'll answer, he's your man! And what's more, there's my name down for two hundred pounds for the election, if it ever comes to be a contest!'"

"This is all very good, but very strange news," cried Jack.

"Well, I can explain nothing of the mystery, if there be one. I only know what I heard and saw myself."

"Let us go to his house, at all events," said Massingbred, who now suffered his companion to rattle on about the state of parties and politics in Oughterard, little heeding his remarks, and only bent on following out his own thoughts. "Give whom the slip?" asked he, suddenly catching at the last words of some observation of Magennis.

"The Martins, of course," resumed the other; "for, as Father Neal says, 'if we can secure the borough for you, you can well afford to stand by *us*; but if you were only Martin's Member, he'd drop you whenever it suited him.'"

"As to-morrow, for instance, it his son should make his appearance!"

"Just so; and that's the very reason for not losing a minute about getting the Martins in for the cost. What can they say, after choosing you and putting you forward?"

"They might make a personal appeal to me—a distinct request to give place to the son."

"And wouldn't you pay great attention to it?" said Magennis, in mockery.

"I'm not so very sure I'd refuse," said Massingbred, slowly.

"Faith, then, you'd better be candid enough to tell the electors so 'at once.' Look now, Mr. Massingbred," said he, coming to a dead halt, and standing directly in front of him, "we don't go the same road, not one step, till I hear from you, distinctly and plainly, what you mean to do."

"This is somewhat of a peremptory proceeding," replied Jack. "I think it would not be very unreasonable to allow a man in my situation a little time for reflection."

"Reflect upon what?" cried Magennis. "Is it what politics you'd be? If that's what you mean, I think you'd better say nothing about it."

"Come, come, Mac, you are not quite fair in this business; there *are* difficulties—there *are* embarrassments very often in the way of doing things which we have made up our minds to do. Now, if I were perfectly certain that the liberal interest here could succeed in spite of Martin ——"

"So it will."

"You're sure of that?"

"I'll show it to you on paper. We'd rather have Martin with us and no contest, because it's cheaper; but if it must come to money, we'll do it."

"Satisfy me on that point, and I'm with you; there's my hand on't!"

And Magennis grasped him in his own strong fingers to ratify the contract.

"While "Mac" went on to give some insight into the views and wishes of his party, they reached the town and entered the main street, and held their way towards old Nelligan's shop.

"That's Father Neal's pony at the door," said Mac, as they approached the shop; "so we'll find them both together."

"I scarcely think I can enter here," said Massingbred, "after what passed last between us. We surely did not part as friends."

"How little you know about us at all," said Mac. "Old Dan bears you no malice, I'd lay fifty pounds on it! But, if you like, I'll just step in and take soundings."

"Do so, then," said Massingbred, not sorry to have even a few moments to himself for quiet thought and consideration. He was still standing and deeply engrossed by his reflections, when he was aroused by hearing his name called aloud, and, on looking up, perceived Magennis beckoning to him from a window overhead.

In obedience to the signal, Jack turned and entered the shop, where his friend quickly joined him. "Old Dan is in his bed, with a heavy cold and a rheumatism, but he'll see you; and Father Neal's with him, and Hayes besides." And with this information he hurried Jack up the stairs, and led him into a darkened room, where the figures of the priest and old Hayes were dimly discernible. Before Massingbred had well crossed the door-sill, Nelligan called out, "Your servant, Mr. Massingbred. I'm more than pleased with your explanation. Let me shake your hand once more."

"I'm not quite sure that I understand you," said Jack, in a low voice; but before he could continue, the priest advanced to greet him, followed by old Peter.

"Wasn't I in luck to catch him on the road this morning?" said Magennis; "he was coming in with the old counsellor, and just got out to walk up a hill ——"

"Remember," said Jack, "that I have few minutes to spare, for I must be in waiting about the market-place when he drives in."

"We must have a conference, though," said Father Neal; "there's much to be settled. First of all, are we to coalesce for the representation?"

"No, no, no!" cried Nelligan. "We'll have it our own way. If Mr. Massingbred will be our Member, we want no help from the Martins."

"There's five pounds, and I'll make it guineas if you like," said old Hayes, putting a note upon the table; "but the devil a Whig or Tory will ever get more out of Peter Hayes!"

A very good-natured laugh from the others showed how little umbrage the frank avowal excited.

"We'll not want for money, Peter, make your mind easy about that," said Dan. "When can you meet the committee, Mr. Massingbred? Could you say to-night?"

"Better to-morrow morning. I must return to Cro' Martin this evening."

"Certainly—of course," said Father Neal, blandly. "You'll have to come to an understanding with Mr. Martin about the borough, declare what your principles are, and how, upon very mature consideration, you find you can't agree with the opinions of himself and his party."

Magennis winked significantly at Jack, as though to say, "Listen to *him—he's* the man to instruct and direct you," and the priest resumed:

"Go on to explain that your only utility in the House could arise from your being the exponent of what you feel to be the truth about Ireland, the crying evils of the Established Church, and the present tenure of land! When you throw these two shells in, sir, the town will be on fire. He'll reply, that under these circumstances there's no more question about your standing for the borough; you'll say nothing—not a word, not a syllable—you'll only smile. If Repton's by—and he's likely to be—he'll get hot, and ask you what you mean by that — "

"There's Scanlan just driving round the corner," said Magennis, in a whisper, and Massingbred arose at once and drew nigh to the bedside.

"Could I say one word to you alone, Mr. Nelligan?" said he, in a low voice.

"Of course," said he. And whispering the priest to take the others into an adjoining room, old Nelligan motioned Jack to sit down beside him.

"You said as I came in," said Jack, "that you were satisfied with my explanation ——"

"To be sure I was," broke in Dan. "All I wanted to know was, that you acted under a misconception. That being once explained, there was no offence on either side. Now, Catty Henderson's letter to my wife put the thing straight at once; she showed that *your* conduct at Cro' Martin arose out of a notion that Joe had slighted you."

"Have you got this letter?" asked Jack, eagerly.

"Indeed, then, I have not; his mother forwarded it to Joe by the same post; but, as I tell you I'm satisfied, there's an end of it."

"Scanlan's asking for you below stairs," said Magennis, putting in his head, "and I hear them saying that they didn't see you in town."

"All right," said Jack; "so I'll just slip out by the garden gate and meet him in the market-square." And with a hurried leave-taking Jack withdrew, his mind very far from that state of tranquil composure in which it was his pride to affect that he invariably revelled.

"There they go!" cried Father Neal, shortly after, as Scanlan drove rapidly by, with Massingbred beside him. "Maybe Master Maurice won't abuse us all round before he turns in at the gate of Cro' Martin."

"Massingbred is too 'cute to mind him," said Magennis.

"Ah, Tom, there's one appeal men of his stamp are never deaf to. You may say fifty things that won't shock them in religion, or morals, or good taste, but only utter the one word 'vulgar,' and their indignation rises at once. That's what Scanlan will do, take my word for it. He'll call us a low set of fellows, that have no position in society—no acceptance anywhere."

"But Massingbred is a gentleman born, and he won't be led astray by such a consideration."

"It is exactly for that very reason that he will," said the priest, stoutly. "It's a strange fact, but there's no manner of man rates social advantages so high as he that has them by right, and without any struggle for them."

"Well," said old Hayes, slowly, "if I once thought that of him, the devil a vote of mine he'd get, no matter what his principles were."

"And there you're wrong, Peter," said Nelligan. "Matters of good manners and breeding need never be discussed between us. Mr. Massingbred will have *his* station—*we*'ll have *ours.* There's a long and weary road before us ere we come to think of our social condition. There's many a cruel statute to be abolished—many a hard grievance to be redressed."

"And, besides that," said Father Neal, with a shrewd twinkle in his eye, "while we're doing the one we'll be helping on the other. Political influence always did, and always will, include rank and station in the world. When English Ministers find their best ally in the Irish Priest, there will be no more sneers at his brogue nor his boots. Men of family and fortune won't shrink from their contact, and maybe you'll see the day yet when coaches and chariots will drive up to the chapel, and ladies in satin and velvet step out to hear mass."

A prophetic view of the Millennium itself could not have astonished old Peter Hayes more completely than did this marvellous suggestion of Father Neal, and he moved away muttering a "Heaven grant it!" between his teeth.

"Where's the next meeting of the committee to be?" asked Nelligan.

"In the Chapel House, to-morrow, at eleven. And that reminds me I've not sent out the summonses." And so saying, Father Neal hastily took leave of his friends and left the room.

Let us take a glance at Mr. Maurice Scanlan, as with an extra box-coat ingeniously wrapped around his lower man, he discoursed pleasantly to his companion while he "tooled" along towards Cro' Martin. Not a word of politics, not a syllable on the subject of party, escaped him as he talked. His conversation was entirely of sporting matters: the odds against Leander, the last bettings on "Firebrand," whether Spicy Bill was really in bad training, as the knowing ones said, and if the course wouldn't "puzzle the young ones" if the wet weather were to continue.

Massingbred was sufficiently well versed in these classic themes to be an amusing and even instructive companion, and communicated many a sly piece of intelligence that would have been deemed priceless in *Bell's Life;* and Scanlan quickly conceived a high estimate for one who had graduated at Newmarket, and taken honours at Goodwood.

"After the kind of life you've led in England, I wonder how you endure this country at all," said Maurice, with real sincerity of voice and manner.

"I like it," said Jack; "the whole thing is new to me, and vastly amusing. I don't mean to say I'd willingly pass a lifetime in this fashion, but for a few weeks——"

"Just so; to give you a better relish for the real thing when you go back again," said Maurice.

"What a neat stepper that leader is!" said Jack, to change the topic from himself and his own affairs. "She's a well-bred one, that's clear."

"Nearly full-bred; the least bit of cocktail in the world. She's out of Crescent, that ran a very good third for the Oaks."

"A strong horse, and a very honest one," said Jack.

"Well, I bought that little mare from young Mr. Martin—the captain—when he was ordered out to India; I put her in training, and ran her at the Curragh in three weeks, and won, too, the St. Lawrence Handicap."

"Is Captain Martin a sporting character?" asked Jack, carelessly.

"He is and he is not," said Scanlan, half querulously. "He likes a safe thing—do you understand?" and he gave a most significant wink as he spoke.

"Oh, then he's close about money matters?" said Massingbred.

"Not exactly that. He's wasteful and spendthrift, but he'd go to the world's end to do a knowing thing—you've seen men of that kind?"

"Scores of them," replied Jack; and they were always the easiest fellows to be duped!"

"Exactly my own experience," said Scanlan, delighted to find his opinions confirmed in such a quarter. "Now, young Martin would give five hundred pounds for a horse to win a fifty pound cup. Don't you know what I mean?"

"Perfectly," said Massingbred, with an approving smile.

"Nobody knows the sums he has drawn since he went away," exclaimed Scanlan, who was momentarily growing more and more confidential.

"There's a deal of high play in India—perhaps he gambles," said Jack, carelessly.

A significant wink and nod gave the answer.

"Well, well," added he, after a pause, "he'll not mend matters by coming back again."

"And is he about to visit England?" asked Massingbred in the same easy tone.

"So they say," replied Scanlan, with an effort at the easy indifference of the other.

"On leave, perhaps?" said Jack, indolently.

"That's more than I know," replied he, and relapsed into a thoughtful silence, during which Massingbred continued to scan his features with a sly, downcast glance peculiar to himself.

"You've never been in Leicestershire, Mr. Scanlan?" said he, when he had fully satisfied himself with his examination. "Well, then, come over there in the spring—say about March next—and pay me a visit. I've got a sort of hunting-box there, with a neat stable, and by that time I hope to raise funds for a couple of nags."

"Trust *me* for the horseflesh, sir. I know where to mount you this very minute. You're not much above eleven stone?"

"Eleven-eight—at least, so I used to be. Is it a bargain? Will you come?"

"There's my hand on't," said the attorney, overjoyed at the prospect.

"Mackworth, and Lord Harry Coverdale, and Sir Wentworth Danby, and a few more, are all my neighbous. Capital fellows, whom you'll be delighted with. Just the sort of men to suit you—up to everything that means sport."

"Exactly what I like!" cried Maurice, in ecstasy.

"We'll arrange it all this evening, then," said Jack. "Just drop into my room after they're all gone to bed, and we'll have a talk over it. "You don't know my father, do you?"

"I haven't that honour," said Scanlan, with an accent of real deference in his voice.

"Another kind of person from these I've mentioned," said Jack, slowly.

"So I should suppose, sir," said Scanlan, a tone of respect involuntarily attaching itself to him as he addressed the son of a Secretary of State.

"Not that he doesn't like field sports, and all the enjoyments of a country life. But, you know, he's an old official—a Downing-street veteran—who really relishes public business, just as you and I would a coursing match, or a heavy pool at Crockys."

Scanlan nodded as if in perfect assent.

"While I say this, it's only fair to add that he has most excellent qualities, and is a staunch friend when he takes any one up. I suspect *you*'d like him. I know he'd like *you*."

"I'm greatly flattered. I don't deserve——"

"You see," said Jack, not heeding the interruption, and assuming the low accents of a confidential communication—"you see, he and I have not been on the very best of terms for some time back; I've done some silly things—spent a little more money than he liked—and, what was still worse in his eyes, refused a first-rate Government appointment—a really good thing, and such as one doesn't meet with every day—and now, the only road back to his favour will be for me to come out strongly in some shape, either as a college prizeman, or in public life. I despise the former. It's all very well for fellows like Nelligan—it's their natural 'beat,'—but for a man like *me*, one who has seen the world—the real world—these are nothing more than schoolboy distinctions—the silver medal he brings home of a Saturday, and makes him the wonder of his sisters for twenty-four hours. I'll have to strike out a line of my own!"

"No fear of you, sir—devil a bit!" said Maurice, with a sententious shake of the head. "Here we are now at Cro' Martin, and there's the first dinner-bell ringing."

"We shall be late, perhaps," said Jack.

"You'll be in good time. As for me, I haven't been asked to dinner, so that when I drop you I'll go down to the village."

"Well, then, I'll walk over and see you in the evening," said Massingbred. "It seems to me—I don't know whether you are of the same opinion, though—but it seems strongly to me that you and I ought to be allies."

"If I thought I was worthy——"

"Come, come, Scanlan, no modesty, old boy. You know you're a devilish clever fellow, and you no more intend to pass your life cruising after petty-session practice in Galway, than I do to settle down here as under-gardener."

"They're all looking at us, sir, from the drawing-room windows," said Scanlan, in a cautious voice; "don't let us appear too confidential." And at the same instant he extended his whip as though to point attention to some distant object, and seem as if he were describing the scenery.

"Shrewd dog it is," muttered Massingbred in soliloquy, but taking good care to be overheard. "I'll beat up your quarters, Scanlan, in a couple of hours or so," said Massingbred, as he descended from the lofty "drag."

Somewhat, but not very much, later than the time appointed, Jack Massingbred appeared in the small chamber of the "Crueskeen"—the humble hostel on the roadside adjoining the demesne of Cro' Martin. Maurice Scanlan had made every preparation which the fluid resources of the house admitted to receive his guest, but they were not destined to be put in requisition.

"I have only come lest you should accuse me of forgetting you, Scanlan," said Massingbred, as he stood in the doorway without removing his hat. "I'm off to Oughterard, having made my adieux at Cro' Martin.

"Left Cro' Martin, and for good!" exclaimed Scanlan.

"If that means for ever, I suspect you're right," replied Jack; "but you'll have the whole story in the morning when you go up there, and doubtless more impartially than I should tell it. And now, good-by for a brief face. We shall meet soon." And, without waiting for answer, he nodded familiarly, stepped briskly to the door, where a post-chaise awaited him, and was gone, before Scanlan had even half recovered from his astonishment and surprise.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN AWKWARD VISITOR.

It is a singularly impressive sensation, and one, too, of which even frequency will scarcely diminish the effect, to pass from the busy streets and moving population of Dublin and enter the quiet courts of the University. The suddenness of the change is most striking, and you pass at once from all the bustling interests of life—its cares and ambitions, its pursuits of wealth and pleasure—into the stillness of a cloister. Scarcely within the massive gates, and the noise of the great capital is hushed and subdued, its sounds seem to come from afar, and in their place is an unbroken calm, or the more solemn echoes of its vaulted roofs.

In a corner of the Old Square, and in a building almost entirely occupied by the University authorities, and whose stairs had seldom echoed beneath less reverend footsteps than those of deans and bursars, were the chambers of Joe Nelligan. He had obtained them in this peculiar locality as a special favour from "the Board," as eminently suited to his habits of study and seclusion, for his was indeed a life of labour—labour, hard, unremitting, and unbroken! Dreary as was the aspect of this spot, it was one dear to the heart of him who occupied it. If it had been the cell wherein he had passed nights of severest toil and days of intense effort, so had it been the calm retreat into which he had retired as a sanctuary, and at times the scene of the hallowed joy he felt when success had crowned all his labours. Thither had he bent his steps at nightfall as to a home; thence had he written the few lines which more than once announced his triumph to his father.

Within those halls had he experienced all that he had ever tasted of successful ambition, and in the depths of that old chair had he dreamed away all the visions of a glorious future. The room in which he sat was a large and lofty one, lighted by two windows deeply set in the wall. Its sides were lined with book-shelves, and books littered the tables and even the floor—for it was one of his caprices to read as he lay at full length, either on the ground or a sofa—and the paper and pens were scattered about in different quarters, as accident suggested. The only thing like ornament to be seen was a lithographic print of Cro' Martin Castle over the fireplace; a strange exception would it seem, but traceable, perhaps, to some remote sence of boyish admiration for what had first awakened in him a feeling of awe and admiration; and there it now remained, timeworn and discoloured, perhaps unnoticed, or looked on with very different emotions. Aye! these pictures are terrible landmarks of our thoughts! I speak not of such as appeal to our hearts by the features we loved, the eyes into whose depths we have gazed, the lips on whose accents we have hung entranced, but even when they trace the outlines of some spot well known to us in boyhood—some scene of long, long years ago. It is not alone that the "Then" and "Now" stand out in strongest contrast, that what we were, and what we are, are in juxtaposition, but that whole memories of what we had once hoped to be come rushing over us, and all the spirit-stirring emotions of early ambitions mingle themselves with the stern realities of the present. And, after all, what success in life, however great and seemingly unexpected it may be, ever equals one of the glorious day-dreams of our boyish ambition, in which there comes no alloy of broken health, wasted energies, and exhausted spirits? or, far worse again, the envious jealousy of those we once deemed friends, and who, had we lived obscurely, still might be such? Student-life is essentially imaginative. The very division of time, the objects which have value to a student's eyes, the seclusion in which he lives, the tranquil frame of mind coexistent with highly-strained faculties, all tend to make his intervals of repose periods of day-dream and reverie. It is not improbable that these periods are the fitting form of relaxation for over-taxed minds, and that the Imagination is the soothing influence that repairs the wear and tear of Reason.

The peculiar circumstances of young Nelligan's position in life had almost totally estranged him from others. The constraint that attaches to a very bashful temperament had suggested to him a certain cold and reserved manner that some took for pride, and many were repelled from his intimacy by this seeming haughtiness. The unhappy course of what had been his first friendship—for such was it with Massingbred—had rendered him more distrustful than ever of himself, and more firmly convinced that to men born as he had been the world imposes a barrier that only is passable by the highest and greatest success. It is true, his father's letter of explanation assuaged the poignancy of his sorrow; he saw that Massingbred had proceeded under a misconception, and had believed himself the aggrieved individual; but all these considerations could not obliterate the fact, that an insult to his social station was the vengeance adopted by him, and that Massingbred saw no more galling outrage in his power than to reflect upon his rank in life.

There are men who have a rugged pride in contrasting what they were with what they are. Their self-love finds an intense pleasure in contemplating difficulties overcome, obstacles surmounted, and a goal won, all by their own unaided efforts, and to such the very obscurity of their origin is a source of boastful exaltation. Such men, are, however, always found in the ranks of those whose success is wealth; wherever the triumphs are those rewarded by station, or the distinctions conferred on intellectual superiority, this vain-glorious sentiment is unknown. An inborn refinement rejects such coarse pleasure, just as their very habits of life derive no enjoyment from the display and splendour reflected by riches.

Joe Nelligan felt his lowly station most acutely, because he saw in it a disqualification for that assured and steady temperament which can make most of success. He would have given half of all he might possess in the world for even so much of birth as might exempt him from a sneer. The painful sensitiveness that never rested nor slept—that made him eternally on the watch lest some covert allusion might be made to him—was a severe suffering; and far from decreasing, it seemed to grow with him as he became older, and helped mainly to withdraw him further from the world.

No error is more common than for bashful men to believe that they are unpopular in society, and that the world "will none of them!" They interpret their own sense of difficulty as a feeling of dislike in others, and retire to their solitudes convinced that these are their fitting dwelling-places. To this unpalatable conviction was Joseph Nelligan now come; and as he entered his chambers, and closed the heavy door behind him, came the thought: "Here at least no mortifications can reach me. These old books are my truest and best of friends, and in their intercourse there is neither present pain nor future humiliation!"

It was on a dark and dreary day in winter, and in that cheerless hour, before the closing in of night, that Joseph sat thus in his solitary home. The sound of carriage-wheels, and the sharp tramp of horses' feet—a rare event in these silent courts—slightly aroused him from a reverie; but, too indolent to go to the window, he merely raised his head to listen; and now a loud knock shook the outer door of his chambers. With a strange sense of pertubation at this unwonted summons, he arose and opened it.

"The Chief Secretary begs to know if Mr. Nelligan is at home?" said a well-powdered footman, in a plain but handsome livery.

"Yes; I am the person," said Joseph, with a diffidence strongly in contrast with the composure of the other; and while he yet stood door in hand, the steps of the carriage were let down, and a tall, venerable-looking man, somewhat past the prime of life, descended and approached him.

"I must be my own introducer, Mr. Nelligan," said he; "my name is Massingbred."

With considerable confusion of manner, and in all that hurry in which bashful men seek to hide their awkwardness, Joseph ushered his visitor into his dimly-lighted chamber.

Colonel Massingbred, with all the staid composure of a very quiet demeanour, had quite sufficient tact to see that he was in the company of one little versed in the world, and, as soon as he took his seat, proceeded to explain the reason of his visit.

"My son has told me of the great pleasure and profit he has derived from knowing you, sir," said he; "he has also informed me that a slight and purely casual event interrupted the friendship that existed between you; and, although unable himself to tender personally to you at this moment all his regrets on the subject, he has charged me to be his interpreter, and express his deep sorrow for what has occurred, and his hope that, after this avowal, it may never be again thought of by either of you."

"There was a misunderstanding—a fault on both sides—I was wrong in the first instance," said Nelligan, faltering and stammering at every word.

"Mr. Nelligan is in a position to be generous," said the colonel, blandly, "and he cannot better show the quality than by accepting a frank and full apology for a mere mistake. May I trust," continued he—but with that slight change of tone that denoted a change of topic—"that you have somewhat abated those habits of severe study you have hitherto pursued? Jack is really uneasy on that score; and wisely remarks, that great talents should be spared the penalty of great labour."

"I am not reading now. I have read very little of late," said Joseph, diffidently.

"I can imagine what that means," said the colonel, smiling. "Mr. Nelligan's relaxation would be the hard labour of less zealous students; but I will also say, that upon other grounds, this must be done with more consideration. The public interests, Mr. Nelligan—the country, to whose service you will one day be called on to contribute those high abilities—will not be satisfied to learn that their exercise should have been impared by over-effort in youth."

"You overrate me much, sir. I fear that you have been misled both as to my capacity and my objects."

"Your capacity is matter of notoriety, Mr. Nelligan; your objects may be as high as any ambition can desire. But perhaps it is obtrusive in one so new to your acquaintance to venture on these topics; if so, pray forgive me, and set it down to the error I have fallen into of fancying that I know you as well personally as I do by reputation and character."

Before Nelligan could summon words to reply to this complimentary speech, the door of his room was flung suddenly open, and a short, thick-set figure, shrouded in a coarse shawl and a great-coat, rushed towards him, exclaiming in a rich brogue,—

"Here I am, body and bones—just off the coach, and straight to your quarters."

"What! Mr. Crow; is it possible?" cried Nelligan, in some confusion.

"Just himself, and no other," replied the artist, disengaging himself from his extra coverings. "When you said to me, 'Come and see me when you visit Dublin,' I said to myself, 'There's a trump, and I'll do it;' and so here I am."

"You left the country yesterday. Did you bring me any letters?" asked Nelligan, but in the uncertain tone of a man who talked merely to say something.

"Not a line—not a word. Your father was over head and ears at work this week back about the election, and it was only the night before last it was over."

"And is it over?" asked Nelligan, eagerly.

"To be sure it is. Young Massingbred is in, and a nice business it is."

"Let me inform you, Mr. Crow, before you proceed further ——" broke in Nelligan; but, as he got so far, Colonel Massingbred laid his hand on his arm, and said, in a bland but steady voice, "Pray allow the gentleman to continue; his account promises to be most interesting."

"Indeed, then, that's what it is not," said Crow, "for I think it's all bad from beginning to end." Another effort to interrupt by Nelligan being repressed by the colonel, Crow resumed:—"Everybody trying to cheat somebody else. The Martins wanting to cheat the borough, the borough wanting to jockey the Martins, and then young Massingbred humbugging them both! And there he is now, Member for Oughterard, and much he cares for them both."

"Was there a contest, sir?" asked the colonel, while by a gesture he enforced silence on Nelligan.

"As bitter a one as ever you saw in your life," continued Simmy, quite flattered at the attention vouchsafed him; "for though the Martins put young Massingbred forward at first, they quarrelled with him before the day for the nomination—something or other about the franchise, or Maynooth, or the Church Establishment—sorra one o' me know much about these matters—but it was a serious difference, and they split about it! And, after all their planning and conniving together, what do they do but propose Martin's son, the man in the dragoons, for the borough! Massingbred bids them do their worst, packs up, sets out for the town, and makes a speech exposing them all! The next morning he comes to the poll, with Joe's father there, and Peter Hayes to propose and second him. Martin drives in with three elegant coaches and four, and tries to do the thing 'grand.' 'It's too late, sir; the people know their power,' as Father Neal told them; and, upon my conscience, I believe it's a most dangerous kind of knowledge; at all events, at it they go; and such fighting and murdering nobody ever saw before. There's not a whole pane of glass in the town, and many a skull cracked as well! One of the wickedest of the set was young Massingbred himself; he'd assault the cars as they drove in, and tear out the chaps he thought were his own voters in spite of themselves. He has the spirit of the devil in him! And then to hear how he harangued the people and abused the aristocracy. Maybe he didn't lay it on well!

To be sure, the Martins drove him to it very hard. They called him a 'renegade' and a 'spy.' They ransacked everything they could get against his character, and at last declared that he had no qualification, and wasn't worth sixpence."

"And how did he answer that?" cried the colonel, who, fixing his eyes on the other, entirely engaged his attention.

"I'll tell you how he did. Just producing the title deeds of an estate that old Nelligan settled on him eight days before—ay, and so well and securely, that Counsellor Repton himself, with all his 'cuteness, couldn't find a flaw in it. Repton said, in my own hearing, 'That's the cleverest blackguard in Ireland!'"

"Mr. Crow—Crow, I say," broke in young Nelligan.

"Pray don't interrupt him," said the colonel, in a tone that seemed to demand obedience. "I want to learn by what majority he gained the day."

"Thirty-eight or thirty-nine; and there's only two hundred and odd in the borough. There may be, perhaps, a dozen of these to strike off on a petition, but he's all safe after that."

"And will they petition against his return?"

"They say so, but nobody believes them. His father,"—and here he made a gesture towards Nelligan—"his father has a strong purse, and will see him well through it all."

"This is very interesting news to me, sir" said the colonel, with another sign to Joseph not to betray him; "for although I could well imagine Jack Massingbred equal to such an occasion as you describe, I was scarcely prepared to hear of the generous confidence reposed in him, nor the prompt and able able co-operation of the Liberal party."

"Ah, I perceive," said Crow, with a significant motion of his eyebrows. "You thought that his name would be against him, and that people would say, 'Isn't he the son of old Moore Massingbred, that took his bribe for the Union?'"

"This is intolerable," cried Nelligan, starting up from his seat and speaking with all the vehemence of outraged feelings. "It is to Colonel Massingbred himself you have dared to address this impertinence.

"What—how—what's this!" exclaimed Crow, in a perfect horror of shame.

"The fault, if there be any, is all mine, sir," said the colonel, pressing him down into his seat. "I would not have lost the animated description you have just given me, uttered as it was in such perfect frankness, for any consideration, least of all at the small price of hearing a public expression on a public man's conduct. Pray, now, continue to use the same frankness, and tell me anything more that occurs to you about this remarkable contest."

This appeal, uttered in all the ease of a well-bred manner, was quite unsuccessful. Mr. Crow sat perfectly horrified with himself, endeavouring to remember what possible extent of offence he might have been betrayed into by his narrative. As for Nelligan, his shame and confusion were even greater still, and he sat gazing ruefully and reproachfully at the unlucky painter.

Colonel Massingbred made one or two more efforts to relieve the awkwardness of the incident, but so palpably fruitless were the attempts, that he desisted, and arose to take his leave. As Joe accompanied him to the door, he tried to blunder out some words of excuse. "My dear Mr. Nelligan," broke in the other with a quiet laugh, "don't imagine for a moment that I am offended. In the first place, your friend was the bearer of very pleasant tidings, for Jack has not condescended to write to me about his success; and secondly, public life is such a stern schoolmaster, that men like myself, get accustomed to rather rough usage, particularly at the hands of those who do not know us. And now, as I am very unwilling to include you in this category, when will you come and see me? What day will you dine with me?"

Nelligan blushed and faltered, just as many another awkward man has done in a similar circumstance; for however an easy matter for you, my dear sir, with all your tact and social readiness to fix the day it will suit you to accept of an almost stranger's hospitality, Joseph had no such self-possession, and only stammered and grew crimson.

"Shall it be on Saturday? for to-morrow I am engaged to the Chancellor, and on Friday I dine with his Excellency. Will Saturday suit you?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir, perfectly; with much pleasure," answered Nelligan.

"Then Saturday be it, and at seven o'clock," said Massingbred, shaking his hand most cordially; while Joe, with sorrowful step, returned to his chamber.

"Well, I think I did it there, at all events!" cried Simmy, as the other entered. "But what in the name of all that's barefaced prevented your stopping me? Why didn't you pull me up short before I made a beast of myself?"

"How could I? You rushed along like a swollen river.

You were so full of your blessed subject, that you wouldn't heed an interruption; and as to signs and gestures, I made twenty without being able to catch your eye."

"I believe I'm the only man living ever does these things," said Simmy, ruefully. "I lost the two or three people that used to say they were my friends by some such blundering folly as this. I only hope it won't do *you* any mischief. I trust he'll see that you are not responsible for my delinquencies!"

There was a hearty sincerity in poor Simmy's sorrow that at once conciliated Nelligan, and he did his best to obliterate every trace of the unhappy incident.

"I scarcely supposed my father would have forgiven Massingbred so easily," said Joe, in his desire to change the topic.

"Blarney—all blarney!" muttered Crow, with an expressive movement of his eyebrows.

"Father Neal himself is rather a difficult subject to treat with," added Joe.

"Blarney again!"

"Nor do I think," continued Nelligan, "that the constituency of the borough, as a body, are remarkable for any special liability to be imposed on!"

"Nor would they, had it been an Irishman was trying to humbug them," said Crow, emphatically. "Take my word for it—and I've seen a great deal of the world, and perhaps not the best of it either—but take *my* word for it, English blarney goes further with us here than all else. It's not that it's clever, or insinuating, or delicate—far from it: but you see that nobody suspects it. The very blunders and mistakes of it have an air of sincerity, and we are, besides, so accustomed always to be humbugged with a brogue, that we fancy ourselves safe when we hear an English accent."

"There's some ingenuity in your theory," said Joe, smiling.

"There's fact in it, that's what there is," said Crow, rising from his seat. "I'll be going now, for I'm to dine with Tom Magennis at six."

"Is he here, too?"

"Yes; and wasn't it a piece of good luck that I didn't say anything about him before Colonel Massingbred?"

"Why so?"

"Just for this, then, that it was young Massingbred gave him a letter to his father, recommending him for some place or other. Half of the borough expects to be in the Treasury, or the Post Office, or the Board of Trade, and I was just on the tip of saying what a set of rapscallions they were. I'm sure I don't know what saved me from it."

"Your natural discretion, doubtless," said Joe, smiling.

"Just so; it must have been that!" replied he, with a sigh.

"You'll breakfast with me to-morrow, Crow, at eight," said Nelligan, as he parted with him at the door. And Simmy, having pledged himself to be punctual, hurried off to keep his dinner appointment.

CHAPTER XXII

A DAY "AFTER."

The reaction that succeeds to a period of festivity has always an air of peculiar sadness and gloom about it. The day after a ball—the withered flowers, the faded decorations, the disordered furniture, all tell the tale of departed pleasure and past enjoyment. The afternoon of that morning which has witnessed a wedding-breakfast—the April landscape of joy and grief, the bridal beauty, and the high-beating hope of the happy lover, have all fled, and in the still and silent chambers there seems to brood a sense of sorrow and mourning. Still with these thoughts happier memories are mingled, the bright pageant of the past rises again before the mind, and smiles, and music, and laughter, and graceful forms come back, and people space with their images. But how different from all this was the day after the election at Cro' Martin.

For a week had the Martins condescended to derogate from their proud station and "play popular" to the electors of Oughterard. They had opened their most sumptuous apartments to vulgar company, and made guests of those they deemed inferior to their own domestics. They had given dinners, and suppers, and balls, and pic-nics. They had lavished all the flatteries of attentions on their rude neighbours. They had admitted them to all the privileges of a mock equality—"so like the real article as not to be detected." They had stored their minds with all the lives and adventures of these ignoble intimates, so as to impart a false colour of friendship to their conversation with them; in a word, and to use one by which her ladyship summed up all the miseries of the occasion, they had "demoralised" more in a week than she believed it possible could have been effected in ten years. Let us be just, and add that my lady had taken the phrase bodily out of her French vocabulary, and in her ardour applied it with its native signification: that is, she alluded to the sad consequences of association with underbred company, and not by any means to any inroads made upon her sense of honour and high principle.

Still, whatever pangs the sacrifice was costing within, it must be owned that no signs of them displayed themselves on the outside. Even Repton, stern critic as he was, said that "they did the thing well." And now it was all over, the guests gone, the festivities ended, the election lost, and nothing in prospect save to settle the heavy outlay of the contest, and pay the high price for that excessively dear article which combines contamination with disappointment.

In her capacity of head of the administration, Lady Dorothea had assumed the whole guidance of this contest. With Miss Henderson as her private secretary, she had corresponded, and plotted, and bribed, and intrigued to any extent; and although Repton was frequently summoned to a council, his advice was very rarely, if ever, adopted. Her ladyship's happy phrase—"one ought to know their own borough people better than a stranger"—usually decided every vexed question in favour of her judgment.

It is a strange characteristic of human nature, that at no time do people inveigh so loudly against bad faith, treachery, and so on, as when themselves deeply engaged in some very questionable enterprise. Now her ladyship had so fully made up her mind to win in this contest, that she had silenced all scruples as to the means. She had set out with some comfortable self-assurance that she knew what was good for those "poor creatures" infinitely better than they did. That it was her duty—a very onerous and disagreeable one, too—to rescue them from the evil influence of demagogues and such like, and that when represented by a member of *her* family, they would be invested with a pledge that everything which proper legislation could do for them would be theirs. So far had she the approval of her own conscience; and for all that was to follow after, she never consulted that tribunal. It is not at all improbable that there was little opportunity of doing so in a week of such bustle and excitement. Every day brought with it fresh cares and troubles; and although Kate Henderson proved herself invaluable in her various functions, her ladyship's fatigues and exertions were of the greatest.

The day after the election, Lady Dorothea kept her bed; the second day, too, she never made her appearance; and it was late in the afternoon of the third that she stole languidly into her library, and ordered her maid to send Miss Henderson to her.

As Kate entered the room she could not help feeling struck by the alteration that had taken place in her ladyship's appearance, and who, as she lay back in a deep chair, with closed eyes and folded hands, looked like one risen from a long sick-bed.

As she started and opened her eyes, however, at Kate's approach, the features assumed much of their wonted expression, and their haughty character was only tinged, but not subdued, by the look of sorrow they wore. With the low and pleasant voice which Kate possessed in perfection, she had begun to utter some words of pleasure at seeing her ladyship again, when the other interrupted her hastily, saying,—

"I want you to read to me, child. There, take that volume of Madame de Sévigné, and begin where you see the mark. You appear weak to-day—tired perhaps?"

"Oh, a mere passing sense of fatigue, my lady," said Kate, assuming her place, and preparing her book.

"Chagrin, annoyance—disgust I would call it—are far more wearing than mere labour. For my own part, I think nothing of exertion. But let us not speak of it. Begin."

And Kate now commenced one of those charming letters, wherein the thought is so embellished by the grace of expression, that there is a perpetual semblance of originality, without that strain upon the comprehension that real novelty exacts. She read, too, with consummate skill. To all the natural gifts of voice and utterance she added a most perfect taste, and that nicely subdued dramatic feeling which lends to reading its great fascination. Nearly an hour had thus passed, and not a word nor a gesture from Lady Dorothea interrupted the reader. With slightly drooped-eyelids, she sat calm and tranquil; and as Kate, at moments, stole a passing glance towards her, she could not guess whether she was listening to her or not.

"You'd have succeeded on the stage, Miss Henderson," said she at length, raising her eyes slowly. "Did it never occur to you to think of that career?"

"Once I had some notion of it, my lady," said Kate, quietly. "I played in a little private theatre of the Duchess's, and they thought that I had some dramatic ability."

"People of condition have turned actors latterly—men, of course, I mean; for women the ordeal is too severe—the coarse familiarity of a very coarse class—the close association with most inferior natures—— By the way, what a week of it we have had! I'd not have believed any one who told me that the whole globe contained as much unredeemed vulgarity as this little neighbourhood. What was the name of the odious little woman that always lifted the skirt of her dress before sitting down?"

"Mrs. Creevy, my lady"

"To be sure—Mrs. Creevy. And her friend, who always came with her?"

"Miss Busk——"

"Yes, of course—Miss Busk, of the Emporium. If I don't mistake, I've given her an order for something—bonnets, or caps—what is it?"

"A head-dress. Your ladyship told her——"

"You'll make me ill, child—positively ill—if you remind me of such horrors. I told you to come and read for me, and you begin to inflict me with what—I declare solemnly—is the most humiliating incident of my life."

Kate resumed her book, and read on. Lady Dorothea was now, however, unmistakably inattentive, and the changing colour of her cheek betrayed the various emotions which moved her.

"I really fancy that Miss Martin liked the atrocious creatures we have received here the past week; she certainly showed them a species of attention quite distinct from mere acceptance; and then they all addressed her like old acquaintance. Did you observe that?"

"I thought that they assumed a degree of familiarity with Miss Martin which was scarcely consistent with their station."

"Say highly ridiculous, child—perfectly preposterous—for, although she will persist in a style of living very opposite to the requirements of her position, she is Miss Martin, and *my* niece!"

There was now a dead pause of some seconds. At length her ladyship spoke:

"To have been beaten in one's own town, where we own every stick and stone in the place, really requires some explanation; and the more I reflect upon it, the more mysterious does it seem. Repton, indeed, had much to say to it. He is so indiscreet—eh, don't you think so?"

"He is very vain of his conversational powers, my lady, and, like all clever talkers, says too much."

"Just so. But I don't think him even agreeable. I deem him a bore," said my lady, snappishly. "That taste for story-telling—that anecdotic habit is quite vulgar—nobody does it now."

Kate listened, as though too eager for instruction to dare to lose a word, and her ladyship went on:

"In the first place, everybody—in society, I mean—knows every story that can or ought to be told; and, secondly, a narrative always interrupts conversation, which is a game to be played by several."

Kate nodded slightly, as though to accord as much acquiescence as consorted with great deference.

"It is possible, therefore," resumed her ladyship, "that he may have divulged many things in that careless way he talked; and my niece, too, may have been equally silly. In fact, one thing is clear, the enemy acquired a full knowledge of our tactics, and met every move we made by another. I was prepared for all the violence, all the insult, all the licentious impertinence and ribaldry of such a contest, but certainly I reckoned on success." Another long and dreary pause ensued, and Lady Dorothea's countenance grew sadder and more clouded as she sat in moody silence. At length a faint tinge of colour marked her cheek, her eyes sparkled, and it was in a voice of more than ordinary energy she said, "If they fancy, however, that we shall accept defeat with submission, they are much mistaken. They have declared the war, and it shall not be for them to proclaim peace on the day they've gained a victory. And Miss Martin also must learn that her Universal Benevolence scheme must give way to the demands of a just and necessary retribution. Have you made out the list I spoke of?"

"Yes, my lady, in part; some details are wanting, but there are eighteen cases here quite perfect."

"These are all cottiers—pauper tenants," said Lady Dorothea, scanning the paper superciliously through her eye-glass.

"Not all, my lady; here, for instance, is Dick Sheehan, the blacksmith, who has worked for the Castle twenty-eight years, and who holds a farm called Mullanahogue on a terminable lease"

"And he voted against us?" broke she in.

"Yes; and made a very violent speech, too"

"Well, turn him out, then," said Lady Dorothea, interrupting her. Now, where's your father? Send for Henderson at once; I'll have no delay with this matter."

"I have sent for him, my lady; he'll be here within half an hour."

"And Scanlan also. We shall want him."

"Mr. Scanlan will be here at the same time."

"This case here, with two crosses before it, what does this refer to?" said her ladyship, pointing to a part of the paper.

"That's Mr. Magennis, my lady, of Barnagheela, who has been making incessant appeals for a renewal of his tenure——"

"And how did he behave?"

"He seconded Mr. Massingbred's nomination, and made a very outrageous speech on the occasion."

"To be sure, I remember him; and he had the insolence—the unparalleled insolence—afterwards to address Miss Martin, as she sat beside me in the carriage, and to tell her that if the rest of the family had been like her, the scene that had been that day enacted would never have occurred! Who is this Hosey Lynch? His name is so familiar to me."

"He is a postmaster of Oughterard, and a kind of factotum in the town."

"Then make a note of him. He must be dismissed at once."

"He is not a freeholder, my lady, but only mentioned as an active agent of the Liberal party."

"Don't adopt that vulgar cant, Miss Henderson—at least, when speaking to *me*. They are not—they have no pretensions to be called the Liberal party. It is bad taste as well as bad policy to apply a flattering epithet to a faction."

"What shall I call them in future, my lady?" asked Kate, with a most admirably assumed air of innocence.

"Call them Papists, Radicals, Insurgents—anything, in fact, which may designate the vile principles they advocate. You mentioned Mr. Nelligan, and I own to you I felt ill—positively ill—at the sound of his name. Just to think of that man's ingratitude—base ingratitude. It is but the other day his son was our guest here—actually dined at the table with us! You were here. *You* saw him yourself!"

"Yes, my lady," was the quiet reply.

"I'm sure nothing could be more civil, nothing more polite, than our reception of him. I talked to him myself, and asked him something—I forget what—about his future prospects, and see if this man, or his father—for it matters not which—is not the ringleader of this same movement! I tell you, child, and I really do not say so to hurt your feelings, or to aggravate your natural regrets at your condition in life, but I say it as a great moral lesson—that low people are invariably deceitful. Perhaps they do not always intend it; perhaps—and very probably, indeed—their standard of honourable dealing is a low one; but of the fact itself you may rest assured. They are treacherous, and they are vindictive!"

"Ennis Cafferty, my lady, who lives at Broguestown," said Kate, reading from the list, "sends a petition to your ladyship, entreating forgiveness if he should have done anything to cause displeasure to the family."

"What *did* he do? that is the question."

"He carried a banner inscribed 'Down with Monopoly!'"

"Mark him for eviction. I'll have no half measures. Miss Martin has brought the estate to such a pass, that we may draw the rents, but never aspire to the influence of our property. These people shall now know their real masters. Who is that knocking at the door?—Come in."

And at this summons, uttered in a voice not peculiar for suavity, Mr. Henderson entered, bowing profoundly, and smoothing the few glossy hairs that streaked rather than covered his bald head. A momentary glance passed between the father and daughter; so fleeting, however, was it, that the most sharp-eyed observer could not have detected its meaning. Lady Dorothea was too deeply occupied with her own thoughts to waste a second's consideration on either of them, and promptly said,

"I want you, Henderson, to inform me who are the chief persons who have distinguished themselves in this outrageous insult to us in the borough."

Mr. Henderson moved from one foot to the other, once more stroked down his hair, and seemed like a man suddenly called upon to enter on a very unpleasant and somewhat difficult task.

"Perhaps you don't like the office, sir?" said she, hastily. "Perhaps your own principles are opposed to it?"

"Na, my leddy," said he deferentially, "I ha' nae principles but such as the family sanctions. It's nae business o' mine to profess poleetical opinions."

"Very true, sir—very just; you comprehend your station," replied she, proudly. "And now to my demand. Who are the heads of this revolt?—for it is a revolt!"

"It's nae sa much a revolt, my leddy," rejoined he, slowly and respectfully, "as the sure and certain consequence of what has been going on for years on the property. I did my best, by warning, and indeed by thwarting, so far as I could, these same changes. But I was not listened to. I foretold what it would all end in, this amēlearating the condition of the small farmer—this raising the moral standard o' the people, and a' that. I foresaw, that if they grew richer they'd grow sturdier; and if they learned to read, they'd begin to reflact. Ah, my leddy, a vara dangerous practice this same habit of reflaction is, to folk who wear ragged clothes and dine on potatoes!"

"I apprehend that the peril is not felt so acutely in your own country, sir!"

"Vara true, my leddy; your remark is vara just; but there's this difference to be remembered: the Scotch are canny folk, and we do many a thing that mightn't be safe for others, but we take care never to do them ower much."

"I don't want your philosophising, sir, about national characteristics. I conclude that you know—it is your duty to know—whence this spirit took its rise. I desire to be informed on this head, and also what measures you have to advise for its suppression."

Another pause, longer and more embarrassing than the first, followed on this speech, and Mr. Henderson really seemed balancing within himself whether he would or would not give evidence.

"Your reluctance has only to go a step further, Henderson, to impress me with the worst suspicions of yourself!" said Lady Dorothea, sternly.

"I'm vara sorry for it, my leddy; I don't deserve them," was the calm reply.

Had Lady Dorothea been quick-sighted she might have detected a glance which the daughter directed towards her father; but she had been more than quick-minded if she could have read its meaning, so strange was the expression it bore,

"In plain words, sir, do you know the offenders? and if so, how can we punish them?"

"Your leddyship has them all there," said he, pointing to the list on the table; "but there's nae sa much to be done wi' them, as the chief o' the lot are men o' mark and means, wi' plenty o' siller, and the sperit to spend it."

"I hear of nothing but defaulters till a moment like this arrives, sir," said her ladyship, passionately. "The burden of every song is arrears of rent; and now I am told that the tenantry are so prosperous, that they can afford to defy their landlord. Explain this, sir!"

Before Mr. Henderson had completed that hesitating process which with him was the prelude to an answer, the door opened, and Mary Martin entered. She was in a riding-dress, and bore the traces of the road on her splashed costume; but her features were paler than usual, and her lip quivered as she spoke.

"My dear aunt," cried she, not seeming to notice that others were present, "I have come back at speed from Kyle's Wood to learn if it be true—but it cannot be true—however the poor creatures there believe it—that they are to be discharged from work, and no more employment given at the quarries. You haven't seen them, dear aunt—you haven't beheld them, as I did this morning—standing panic-stricken around the scene of their once labour, not speaking, scarcely looking at each other, more like a shipwrecked crew upon an unknown shore than fathers and mothers beside their own homesteads!"

"It was I gave the order, Miss Martin," said Lady Dorothea, proudly. "If these people prefer political agitation to an honest subsistence, let them pay the price of it."

"But who says that they have done so?" replied Mary. "These poor creatures have not a single privilege to exercise; they haven't a vote amongst them. The laws have forgotten them just as completely as human charity has."

"If they have no votes to record, they have voices to outrage and insult their natural protectors. Henderson knows that the worst mobs in the borough were from this very district."

"Let him give the names of those he alludes to. Let him tell me ten—five—ay, three, if he can, of Kyle's Wood men who took any share in the disturbances. I am well aware that it is a locality where he enjoys little popularity himself; but at least he need not calumniate its people. Come, sir, who are these you speak of?"

Kate Henderson, who sat with bent-down head during this speech, contrived to steal a glance at the speaker so meaningful and so supplicating, that Mary faltered, and as a deep blush covered her cheek, she hastily added, "But this is really not the question. This miserable contest has done us all harm; but let us not perpetuate its bitterness! We have been beaten in an election, but I don't think we ought to be worsted in a struggle of generosity and good feeling. Come over, dear aunt, and see these poor creatures."

"I shall certainly do no such thing, Miss Martin. In the first place, the fever never leaves that village."

"Very true, aunt; and it will be worse company if our kindness should desert them. But if you will not come, take *my* word for the state of their destitution. We have nothing so poor on the whole estate."

"It is but a moment back I was told that the spirit of resistance to our influence here arose from the wealthy independence of the people; now, I am informed it is their want and destitution suggest the opposition. I wish I could ascertain which of you is right."

"It's little matter, if our theory does not lead us to injustice," said Mary, boldly. "Let me only ride back to the quarries, aunt, and tell these poor people that they've nothing to fear—that there is no thought of withdrawing from them their labour nor its hire. Their lives are, God knows, not overlaid with worldly blessings; let us not add one drop that we can spare to their cup of sorrow."

"The young leddy says na mare than the fact; they're vara poor, and they're vara dangerous!"

"How do you mean dangerous, sir?" asked Lady Dorothea, hastily.

"There's more out o' that barony at the assizes, my leddy, than from any other on the property."

"Starvation and crime are near relatives all the world over," said Mary; "nor do I see that the way to cure the one, is to increase the other."

"Then let us get rid of both," said Lady Dorothea. "I don't see why we are to nurse pauperism either into fever or rebellion. To feed people that they may live to infect you, or, perhaps, shoot you, is sorry policy. You showed me a plan for getting rid of them, Henderson—something about throwing down their filthy hovels, or unroofing them, or something of that kind, and then they were to emigrate—I forget where—to America, I believe—and become excellent people, hard-working and quiet. I know it all sounded plausible and nice; tell Miss Martin your scheme, and if it does not fulfil all you calculated, it will at least serve for an example on the estate."

"An example!" cried Mary. "Take care, my lady. It's a dangerous precept you are about to inculcate, and admits of a terrible imitation!"

"Now you have decided me, Miss Martin," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"And, good Heavens! is it for a rash word of mine—for a burst of temper that I could not control—you will turn out upon the wide world a whole village—the old that have grown grey there—the infant that clings to its mother in her misery, and makes a home for her by its very dependence——"

"Every one of them, sir," said Lady Dorothea, addressing herself to Henderson, who had asked some question in a low whisper. "They're cottiers all; they require no delays of law, and I insist upon it peremptorily."

"Not till my uncle hears of it!" exclaimed Mary, passionately. "A cruel wrong like this shall not be done in mad haste." And with these words, uttered in all the vehemence of great excitement, she rushed from the room in search of Martin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CHARACTERISTIC LETTER.

It may save the reader some time, and relieve him from the weary task of twice listening to the same story, if we steal some passages from a letter which, about this time, Jack Massingbred addressed to his former correspondent. He wrote from the inn at Oughterard, and, although still under the influence of the excitement of the late contest, expressed himself with much of his constitutional calm and frankness. We shall not recapitulate his narrative of the election, but proceed at once to what followed on that description.

"I see, Harry, the dubious projection of your nether lip, I appreciate the slow nod of your head, and I fancy I can hear the little half sigh of deprecation with which you hear all this. Worse again, I don't seek to defend myself. I think my case a bad one; but still I feel there is something to be said in mitigation. You need not trouble yourself to draw up an indictment: I plead guilty—entirely guilty to all you can say. I *have* broken with 'the gentlemen' to cast my lot with the 'canaille.'—Why haven't we a good wholesome word of our own for a home-made article?—I *have* deserted the ranks where, whatever fortune befel, it was honour to fight; I have given up association with the well-bred and the well-mannered, to rub shoulders with the coarse-minded, the rough-hearted, and the vulgar. There is not a reproach you can make me on this score that I haven't already addressed to myself. I feel all the indignity of my situation—I experience all the insult of their companionship; but, as the lady detected in possession of her lover's picture pleaded in her defence that it was not like him, so I hope to arrest judgment against me by the honest avowal that I detest and despise my party. I don't talk to *you* about their principles—still less do I say anything of my own—but merely advert here to the miserable compromise a gentleman is driven to make with every sentiment of his nature who once enlists under their flag. As Travers told us one evening—you were of the party, and must remember it—he was speaking of the Peninsular compaign, in which he served as a volunteer—'So long as you were fighting,' said he, 'it was all very well; the fellows were stout-hearted and full of spirit, and you felt that you couldn't ask for better comrades; but when the struggle was over—when it came to associating, living with them, hearing their sentiments, sharing their opinions, hopes, fears, wishes, and so on—then it became downright degradation!' Not, as he remarked, that they were one jot more vicious or more corrupt than their betters, but that every vice and every corruption amongst them seemed doubly offensive by the contact with their coarse natures. Now, my friends, the Liberals, are somewhat in the same category. They do their work right well on the field of battle; they fight, swear, slander, and perjure themselves just like gentlemen; or rather better of the two. They even come down handsomely with their cash—the last best evidence any man can tender of his honesty in a cause; but then, Harry, the struggle over, it is sorry work to become their companion and their friend! Oh! if you had but seen the dinners I have eaten, and the women I have handed down to them!—if you could have but heard the sentiments I have cheered—ay, and even uttered—only listened to the projects we have discussed, and the plans matured as we sat over our whisky-punch—you'd say, 'Jack must have the ambition of the Evil One himself in his heart, since he pays this price for the mere glimpse of the goal before him!'

"Throughout the whole of your last letter I can detect a sense of apprehension lest, 'with all my tact,' as you phrase it, these people are not really duping *me*—using me for a present purpose, with the foregone resolve to get rid of me when it be accomplished. To be sure they are, Harry. I never doubted it for a moment. The only question is, which of us shall trip up the other! They desire to show the world that the operation of the Relief Bill will not be of that exclusive character its opponents proclaimed—that a Catholic constituency would choose a Protestant—even prefer one—as Mr. O'Connell said. The opportunity was a good one to display this sentiment, and so they took me! Now, *my* notion is, that every great measure can have only one real importance, by throwing weight into the scale of one or other of the two great Parliamentary parties. Do what you will—agitate, write, speak, pamphleteer, and libel—but all resolves itself to some question of a harm to one side and good to the other, the country, the while, being wonderfully little the better or the worse for all the legislation. We used to have a Constitution in England: we have now only got a Parliament, and to be anything in the nation a man must make himself felt there! This, 'if I have the stuff in me,' as old Sherry said, I mean to do—*et nous verrons!*

"The fatigues of this new life are very great. I'm up before it is well day, writing and revising newspaper articles, answering letters, and replying to 'queries.' I have my whole mornings taken up in audiences of my constituents, swallowing pledges, and recording promises; and later on I go to dinner, 'with what appetite I may,' to some one of my faithful supporters—some corn-chandler who spouts 'foreign politics,' or a grocer who ought to be Colonial Secretary! But still I'm thankful for all this bustle and occupation: it averts reflection, it raises a barrier against thought, and muffles the clapper of that small hand-bell in the human heart men call their conscience! They say few men would have courage for either a battle or a wedding if it were not for the din of the trumpets and the joy-bells; and I'm convinced that noise—mere noise—has no small share in determining the actions of mankind!

"And now, Harry, for a confession. I'm heartily sorry for the whole of this business, and were it to be done again, nothing would tempt me to play the same part in it. I was leading the jolliest life imaginable at Cro' Martin. I had made the place and the people my own. It was a kind of existence that suited me—sufficient of occupation, and enough of leisure. There were oddities to laugh at, eccentricities to quiz, an old lawyer to sharpen one's wits upon, and a governess—such a governess to flirt with! Don't mistake me, Harry; it was not one of those hand-pressing, downcast-gazing, low-speaking cases in which you are such a proficient. It was far more like the approaches one might be supposed to make to a young tigress in a cage—a creature with whom a mistake would be your ruin, and whom you always caressed with a sense of impending peril.

"I told you how ably she aided me in this contest—how she laboured to obtain information—secret information—for me as to every voter in the borough. What prompted her to this course I cannot fathom. She does not appear to bear any grudge against the Martins—she had been but a few weeks amongst them—and is, all things considered, well treated and well received. As little was it any special favour towards myself. Indeed, on that head she will not permit me to fall into any error. I cannot suppose that with her foreign education and foreign habits she cares a jot for the small schemes and intriguings of home politics—so, what can it possibly mean? Help me to the solution of this riddle, and I'll be more deeply your debtor than I can well say. Brought up as she has been —and as I have told you in my last letter—nothing would be more natural than her adoption of every prejudice of the class by whom she has been so singularly distinguished; and in this light I have always viewed her. Under the calm reserve of a most polished manner you can still detect a shrinking horror of all the vulgar association of the rank she came from. Her quiet deference—haughtier by far than the domination of those above her—the humility that no flatteries ever breached—a self-possession that never seemed so strong as when resisting the blandishments of praise,—these are strange gifts in a young girl with beauty enough to turn half the heads of half the fools we know of, and more than enough to make crazy that of him who writes this.

"I tried twenty things to resist this tendency on my part. I laughed at myself for the absurdity it would lead to. I ridiculed to my own heart all the extravagance of such a project. I even wrote a paragraph for the *Times*, announcing the marriage of Jack Massingbred with Kate Henderson, the only daughter of Paul Henderson, the Land Steward, and pasted it above my chimney to shock and outrage me. I did more. I made love to Miss Martin—as an alterative, as the doctors would call it—but I fell at a stone wall, got laughed at, and cured of my passion; and lastly, I climbed that lofty tree of my family, and sat high among the branches of defunct barons and baronets, to get a bird's-eye view of the small mushrooms that grow on the earth beneath, but hang me, Harry, if the agarics didn't seem better company, and I was glad to get down amongst them again, meaning thereby to sit beside that one dear specimen of the class I allude to!

"I see that you are curious to know how all these late events have modified my relations with my father, and really I cannot answer your inquiry. It is more than likely that my obtaining a seat in Parliament will embarrass rather than serve him with his party, since he will be expected to control a vote over which he can exert no influence.

"As yet, nothing has occurred to draw us any closer, and my only communications to him have been certain recommendatory letters, which my constituents here have somewhat peremptorily demanded at my hands. I gave them freely, for, after all, application is an easier task than refusing, and besides, Harry, it is very difficult to persuade your election friends that you cannot be a patriot and a patron at the same time, and that, in the luxurious pastime of badgering a government, a man surrenders some of the pretensions to place. I gave them, therefore, all the letters they asked for; and if the Chief Secretary but answer one-half of my appeals, Galway—or at least that small portion of it called Oughterard—will have no cause of complaint on the score of its claims to office.

"You are, I perceive astonished that I continue to remain here. So am I, Harry. The place is detestable in almost every way. I am beset with entreaties, persecuted with vulgar attentions, bored to death by the insolent familiarity of people I cannot—do all that I will—grow intimate with; and yet I stay on, pretexting this, that, and t'other to myself, and shrinking even to my own heart to avow the real reason of my delay!

"I want once again, if only for a few moments, to see her. I want to try if by any ingenuity I could discover the mystery of her conduct with regard to myself; and I want also, if there should be the need to do so, to justify to her eyes many things which I have been forced by circumstances to do in this contest.

"I have not the slightest suspicion as to how she views all that has occurred here. Two notes which I addressed to her, very respectful, business-like epistles, have not been answered, though I entreated for a few words to acknowledge their receipt. The Martins, since the election, seem to have quarantined the whole town and neighbourhood. They suffer none of their people to enter here. They have sent eight miles further off to market, and even changed the post-town for their letters. Their policy is, so far, short-sighted, as it has called into an exaggerated importance all that small fry—like the Nelligans—who have hitherto been crushed under the greater wealth of the rich proprietor. But I am again drifting into that tiresome tideway of politics which I have sworn to myself to avoid, if only for a few days; in pursuance of which wise resolve I shall betake myself to the mountains, under the pretext of shooting. A gun is an idler's passport, and a game-bag and a shot-pouch are sufficient to throw a dignity over vagabondism. You will therefore divine that I am not bent on snipe slaughter, but simply a good excuse to be alone!

"I mean to go to-morrow, and shall first turn my steps towards the coast, which, so far as I have seen, is singularly bold and picturesque. If nothing occurs to alter my determination, I'll leave this unclosed till I can tell you that I have come back here, which in all probability will be by the end of the week.

* * * * * * *

"Once more here, my dear Harry, I sit down to add a few lines to this already over lengthy epistle. Wishing to give you some notion of the scenery, I set out with all the appliances of a sketcher, and have really contrived to jot down some spots which, for general wildness and grandeur, it would be difficult to surpass within the bounds of our country. Nor is it alone the forms that are so striking, although I could show you outlines here perfectly Alpine in their fantastic extravagance; but the colours are finer than anything I have seen north of the Alps—heaths and lichens grouped over rugged masses of rock, with shades of purple and gold such as no diadem ever equalled. The sunsets, too, were gorgeous! You remember how struck we both were at the moment when the dome and aisle of St. Peter's burst into light, and from the darkness of midnight every column and every statue became illuminated in a second, but a thousand times beyond this in grandeur of effect was the moment of the sun's decline below the horizon. The instant before, the great sullen sea was rolling and heaving with its leaden blue surface, slightly traced here and there with foam, but no sooner had the sun touched the horizon, than a flood of purple glory spread over the whole ocean, so that it became like a sea of molten gold and amber. The dark cliffs and rugged crags, the wave-beaten rocks, and the rude wild islands, darksome and dismal but a moment back, were now all glittering and glowing, every pinnacle and every peak in deep carbuncle red. How suggestive to him who would describe an enchanted land or region of magic splendour! and what a hint for your scene-painter, who, with all his devices of Bengal and blue light, with every trick that chemistry and optics could aid in, never fancied anything so splendid or so gorgeous.

"I have half-filled a sketch-book for you, and more than half-filled my game-bag with mosses and ferns, and such like gear, which, knowing your weakness, I have gathered, but, not understanding their virtues, may, for aught I know, be the commonest things in creation. I can only vouch for their being very beautiful, and very unlike anything else I ever saw before; fragments of marble, too, and specimens of Irish jasper and onyx, are amidst my rubbish, or my treasures, whichever you shall pronounce them to be.

"I got through—don't fancy that the phrase denotes weariness or *ennui*—I got through four days in these pursuits, and then I took boat, and for three more I paddled about the coast, dipping in amongst the cliffs, and creeks, and caves of this wonderful coast, gathering shells and seaweed, and shooting curlews and eating lobsters, and, in fact, to all intents and purposes, suffering a 'sea change' over myself and my spirit as unearthlike as well may be imagined; and at last I bethought me of my new opening career, and all that I ought to be doing in preparation of St. Stephen's, and so I turned my steps landward, and towards 'my borough.' I like to say 'my borough,' it sounds feudal, and insolent, and old Tory-like; it smacks of the day when people received their representative thankfully, as an alms, and your great proprietor created his nominee as the consul ennobled his horse!

"Revolving very high thoughts, reciting Edmund Burke's grandest perorations, and picturing very vividly before me the stunning triumphs of my own eloquence in the House, I plodded along, this time at least wonderfully indifferent to the scenery, and totally oblivious of where I was, when suddenly I perceived the great trees of Cro' Martin demesne shadowing the road I travelled, and saw that I was actually within a mile or so of the Castle! You, Harry, have contrived, some way or other, to have had a very rose-coloured existence. I never heard that you had been jilted by a mistress, 'cut' by a once friend, or coldly received by the rich relative from whom you derived all your expectations. I am not even aware that the horse you backed ever went wrong, or that the bill you endorsed for another ever came back protested. In fact, you are what the world loves best, cherishes most, and lavishes all its blandishments on—a devilish lucky fellow! Lucky in a capital fortune, abundance of good gifts, good looks, and an iron constitution—one of those natures that can defy duns, blue-devils, and dyspepsia! Being, therefore, all this, well received everywhere, good company where pheasants are to be shot, Burgundy to be drunk, or young ladies to be married—for you are a good shot, a good wine-taster, and a good 'parti'—with such gifts, I say, it will be very difficult to evoke your sympathy on the score of a misfortune which no effort of your imagination could compass. In fact, to ask you to feel what I did, as I found myself walking along *outside* of those grounds *within* which, but a few days back, I was the cherished visitor, and in sight of that smoke which denoted a hearth beside which I was never to sit again, and from which I was banished with something not very unlike disgrace! No sophistry I could summon was sufficient to assuage the poignancy of this sentiment. I feel certain that I could stand any amount of open public abuse, any known or unknown quantity of what is genteely called 'slanging,' but I own to you that the bare thought of how my name might at that moment be mentioned beneath that roof, or even the very reserve that saved it from mention, caused me unutterable bitterness, and it was in a state of deep humiliation of spirit that I took the very first path that led across the fields and away from Cro' Martin.

"They tell me that a light heart makes easy work of a day's journey. Take my word for it, that to get over the ground without a thought of the road, there's nothing like a regular knock-down affliction. I walked eight hours, and at a good pace, too, without so much as a few minutes' halt, so overwhelmed was I with sensations that would not admit of my remembering anything else. My first moment of consciousness —for really it was such—came on as I found myself breasting a steep stony ascent, on the brow of which stood the bleak residence of my friend Mr. Magennis, of Barnagheela. I have already told you of my visit to his house, so that I need not inflict you with any new detail of the locality, but I confess, little as it promised to cheer or rally the spirits, I was well pleased to find myself so near a roof under which I might take refuge. I knocked vigorously at the door, but none answered my summons. I repeated my demand for admittance still more loudly, and at last went round to the back of the house, which I found as rigidly barred as the front. While still hesitating what course to take, I spied Joan Landy—you remember the girl I spoke of in a former letter—ascending the hill at a brisk pace. In a moment I was beside her. Poor thing, she seemed overjoyed at our meeting, and warmly welcomed me to her house. 'Tom is away,' said she, 'in Dublin, they tell me, but he'll be back in a day or two, and there's nobody he'd be so glad to see as yourself when he comes.' In the world, Harry—that is, in your world and mine—such a proposition as Joan's would have its share of embarrassments. Construe it how one might, there would be at least some awkwardness in accepting such hospitality. So I certainly felt it, and, as we walked along, rather turned the conversation towards herself, and whither she had been.

"'I'm not more than half an hour out of the house," said she, 'for I only went down the boreen to show the short cut by Kell Mills to a young lady that was here.'

"'A visitor, Mrs. Joan?'

"'Yes. But to be sure you know her yourself, for you came with her the day she walked part of the way back with me from Cro' Martin.'

"'Miss Henderson?'

"'Maybe that's her name. She only told me to call her Kate.'

"'Was she here alone?—did she come on foot?—which way is she gone?' cried I, hurrying question after question. Perhaps the tone of my last was most urgent, for it was to that she replied, by pointing to a glen between two furze-clad hills, and saying, 'That's the road she's taking, till she crosses the ford at Coomavaragh.'

"'And she is alone?'

"'That she is; sorra a one with her, and she has five good miles before her.'

"I never waited for more; if I did say good-by to poor Joan, I really forget; but I dashed down the mountain at speed, and hurried onward in the direction she had pointed out. In an instant all my fatigue of the day was forgotten, and as I went along I remembered nothing, thought of nothing, but the object of my pursuit.

"You who have so often bantered me on the score of my languor—that 'elegant lassitude,' as you used to call it, which no zeal ever warmed, nor any ardour ever could excite, would have been somewhat astonished had you seen the reckless, headlong pace at which I went, vaulting over gates, clearing fences, and dashing through swamps, without ever a moment's hesitation. Picture to yourself, then, my splashed and heated condition, as, after a two miles' chase in this fashion, I at length overtook her, just as she was in search of a safe spot to ford the river. Startled by the noise behind her, she turned suddenly round, and in an instant we stood face to face. I'd have given much to have seen some show of confusion, even embarrassment, in her looks; but there was not the slightest. No, Harry, had we met in a drawing-room her manner could not have been more composed, as she said:

"'Good morning, Mr. Massingbred. Have you had much sport?'

"'My chase was after *you*, Miss Henderson,' said I, hurriedly. 'I just reached Barnagheela as Mistress Joan returned, and having learned which road you took, followed you in all haste.'

"'Indeed!' exclaimed she, and in a voice wherein there were blended a vast variety of meanings.

"'Yes,' I resumed; 'for an opportunity of meeting you alone—of speaking with you even for a few moments—I have delayed my departure this week back. I wrote to you twice.'

"'Yes; I got your letters.'

"'But did not deign to answer them.'

"'I did not write to you, because, situated as *I* was, and regarded as *you* were at Cro' Martin, there would have been a species of treason in maintaining anything like correspondence, just as I feel there is somewhat akin to it in our intercourse at this moment.'

"'And have the events occurring lately changed *your* feeling with regard to me?' asked I, half reproachfully.

"'I don't exactly know to what former condition you refer, Mr. Massingbred,' said she, calmly. 'If to the counsels which you were gracious enough to receive at hands humble and inexperienced as mine, they were given, as you remember, when you were the chosen representative of the family at Cro' Martin, and continued only so long as you remained such.'

"'Then I have deceived myself, Miss Henderson,' broke I in. 'I had fancied that there was a personal good-will in the aid you tendered me. I even flattered myself that I owed my success entirely and solely to your efforts.'

"'You are jesting, Mr. Massingbred,' said she, with a saucy smile; 'no one better than yourself knows how to rely upon his own abilities.'

"'At least, confess that it was you who first suggested to me that they were worth cultivating; that it was *you* who pointed out a road to me in life, and even promised me your friendship as the price of my worthily adopting it!'

"'I remember the conversation you allude to. It was on this very road it occurred.'

"'Well, and have I done anything as yet to forfeit the reward you spoke of?'

"'All this is beside the real question, Mr. Massingbred,' said she, hurriedly. 'What you are really curious to learn is, why 't is that I, being such as I am, should have displayed so much zeal in a cause which could not but have been opposed to the interests of those who are my patrons. That you have not divined the reason, is a proof to me that I could not make you understand it. I don't want to talk riddles—enough that I say it was a caprice.'

"'And yet you talked seriously, persuasively to me, of my future road in life; you made me think that you saw in me the qualities that win success.'

"'You have a wonderful memory for trifles, sir, since you can recal so readily what I said to you.'

"'But it was not a trifle to *me*,' said I.

"'Perhaps not, Mr. Massingbred, since it referred to yourself. I don't mean this for impertinence!'

"'I am glad that you say so!' cried I, eagerly. 'I am but too happy to catch at anything which may tend to convince me that you would not willingly hurt my feelings.'

"For several minutes neither of us uttered a word; at last I said: 'Should I be asking too much, if I begged Miss Henderson to tell me whether she is dissatisfied with anything I may have done in this contest? There may be matters in which I have been misrepresented; others, of which I could make some explanation.'

"'Are you quite satisfied with you yourself, sir?' said she, interrupting me.

"'No,' said I; "so little am I so, that were it all to do over again, I'd not embark in it. The whole affair, from beginning to end, is a false position.'

"'Ignoble associates—low companionships—very underbred acquaintances,' said she, in a tone of scorn that seemed far more directed at *me* than the others. I believe I showed how I felt it. I know that my cheek was on fire for some seconds after.

"'The Martins, I take it, are outrageous with me?' said I, at last.

"'They never speak of you!' was the reply.

"'Not my lady?'

"'No!'

"'Nor even Repton?'

"'Not once.'

"'That, at least, is more dignified; and if any accident should bring us together in county business——'

"'Which is not likely.'

"'How so?' asked I.

"'They are going away soon.'

"'Going away—to leave Cro' Martin—and for any time?'

"'My lady speaks of the continent, and that, of course, implies a long absence.'

"'And has this miserable election squabble led to this resolve? Is the neighbourhood to be deprived of its chief ornament—the people of their best friend—just for sake of a petty party triumph?'

"'It is fortunate Mr. Massingbred's constituents cannot hear him,' said she, laughing.

"'But be serious, and tell me how far am I the cause of all this?'

"'The whole cause of it—at least, so far as present events can reveal.'

"'How they must abhor me!' said I, half involuntarily.

"'Avec les circonstances atténuantes,' said she, smiling again.

"'How so?—what do you mean?'

"'Why, that my lady is thankful at heart for a good excuse to get away—such a pretext as Mr. Martin himself cannot oppose. Repton, the Grand Vizier, counsels economy, and, like all untravelled people, fancies France and Italy cheap to live in; and Miss Mary is, perhaps, not sorry, with the prospect of the uncontrolled management of the whole estate.'

"'And is she to live here alone?'

"'Yes; she is to be sole mistress of Cro' Martin, and without even a governess, since Miss Henderson is to accompany her ladyship as private secretary, minister of the household, and, in fact, any other capacity you may please in flattery to assign her. And now, Mr. Massingbred, that I have, not over-discreetly, perhaps, adventured to talk of family arrangements to a stranger, will you frankly acknowledge that your pride, or self-love, or any other quality of the same nature, is rather gratified than otherwise at all the disturbance you have caused here? Don't you really feel pleased to think that you have revolutionised a little neighbourhood, broken up a society, severed the ties that bound proprietor and peasant, and, in fact, made a very pretty chaos, out of which may come anything or everything?'

"'When you address such a question as this to me, you don't expect an answer. Indeed, the quere itself is its own reply,' said I.

"'Well said, sir, and with consummate temper, too. Certainly, Mr. Massingbred, you possess one great element of success in public life.'

"'Which is——'

"'To bear with equanimity and cool forbearance the impertinences of those you feel to be your inferiors.'

"'But it is not in this light I regard Miss Henderson, be assured,' said I, with earnestness; "and if I have not replied to her taunts, it is not because I have not felt them.'

"I thought I detected a very faint flush on her cheek as I said this, and certainly her features assumed a more serious expression than before.

"'Will you let me speak to you of what is far nearer my heart,' said I, in a low voice,—'far nearer than all this strife and war of politics? And will you deign to believe that what I say is prompted by whatever I know in myself of good or hopeful?'

"'Say on—that is, if I ought to hear it,' said she, coldly.

"Deterred a second or two by her manner, I rallied quickly, and with an ardour of which I cannot convey an impression, much less explain—one of those moments of rhapsody, *you*'d call it—poured forth a warm declaration of love. Ay, Harry, sincere, devoted love!—a passion which, in mastering all the common promptings of mere worldly advantage and self-interest, had really inspired me with noble thoughts and high aspirations.

"A judge never listened to a pleading with more dignified patience than she did to my appeal. She even waited when I had concluded, as it were to allow of my continuing, had I been so minded; when, seeing that I had closed my argument, she quietly turned about, and facing the road we had just been travelling, pointed to the bleak, bare mountain on which Barnagheela stood. 'It was yonder, then, that you caught up this lesson, sir. The admirable success of Mr. Magennis's experiment has seduced you!'

"'Good Heavens, Kate," cried I——

"'Sir,' said she, drawing herself proudly up, 'you are continuing the parallel too far.'

"'But Miss Henderson cannot for a moment believe——'

"'I can believe a great deal, sir, of what even Mr. Massingbred would class with the incredible; but, sir, there are certain situations in life which exact deference, from the very fact of their humility. Mine is one of these, and I am aware of it.'

"'Will you not understand me aright?' cried I eagerly. 'In offering to share my fortune in life with you——'

"'Pray, sir, let this stop here. Poor Joan, I have no doubt, felt all the grandeur of *her* elevation, and was grateful even in her misery. But *I* should not do so. I am one of those who think that the cruellest share in a mésalliance is that of the humbler victim. To brave such a fate, there should be all the hopeful, sanguine sense of strong affection; and, as a reserve to fall back on in reverses, there should be an intense conviction of the superiority over others of him from whom we accept our inferiority. Now, in my case, these two conditions are wanting. I know you like frankness, and I am frank.'

"'Even to cruelty,' said I.

"'We are very near Cro' Martin, sir, and I think we ought to part,' said she, calmly.

"'And is it thus you would have us separate? Have I nothing to hope from time—from the changes that may come over your opinions of me?'

"'Calculate rather on the alterations in your own sentiments, Mr. Massingbred; and perhaps the day is not very distant when you will laugh heartily at yourself for the folly of this same morning—a folly which might have cost you dearly, sir, for I might have said, Yes.'

"'Would that you had.'

"'Good-by, sir,' said she, not noticing my interruption, 'and remember that, if I should ever need it, I have a strong claim on your gratitude. Good-by!'

"She did not give me her hand at parting, but waved it coldly towards me as she went. And so she passed the little wicket, and entered the dark woods of the demesne, leaving me in a state wherein the sense of bewilderment alone prevailed over all else.

"I have given you this narrative, Harry, as nearly as I can remember, every step of it; but I do not ask you to understand it better than I do, which means, not at all! Nor will I worry you with the thousand-and-one attempts I have made to explain to myself what I still confess to be inexplicable. I mean to leave this at once. Would that I had never come here! Write to me soon; but no bantering, Harry. Not even my friendship for *you*—oldest and best of all my friends—could stand any levity on this theme. This girl knows me thoroughly, since she comprehends that there is no so certain way to engage my affections as to defy them!

"Write to me, I entreat. Address me at my father's, where I shall be, probably, within a week. Were I to read over what I have just written, the chances are I should burn the letter; and so, sans adieu.

"Yours ever,
"JACK MASSINGBRED."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THREE COACHES AND THEIR COMPANY.

THREE large and stately travelling-carriages, heavily laden, and surrounded with all the appliances for comfort possible, rolled from under the arched gateway of Cro' Martin. One eager and anxious face turned hastily to catch a last look at the place he was leaving, and then as hastily concealing his emotion with his handkerchief, Mr. Martin sat back in the carriage in silence.

"Twenty minutes after eight," exclaimed Lady Dorothea, looking at her watch. "It is always the case; one never can get away in time."

Roused by the speech, Martin started, and turned again to the window.

"How handsome those larches are," cried he; "it seems but yesterday that I planted them, and they are magnificent trees now."

Her ladyship made no reply, and he went on, half as though speaking to himself; "The place is in great beauty just now. I don't think I ever saw it looking so well. Shall I ever see it again?" muttered he, in a still lower tone.

"I really cannot think it ought to break your heart Mr Martin, if I were to say 'No' to that question," said she, testily.

"No—no!" exclaimed he, repeating the word after her; "not come back here!"

"There is nothing to prevent us if we should feel disposed to do so," replied she, calmly. "I only observed that one could face the alternative with a good courage. The twenty years we have passed in this spot are represented to *your* mind by more leafy trees and better timber. To *me* they are written in the dreary memory of a joyless weary existence. I detest the place," cried she, passionately, "and for nothing more, that even on leaving it my spirits are too jaded and broken to feel the happiness that they ought."

Martin sighed heavily, but did not utter a word.

"So it is," resumed she, "one ever takes these resolutions too late. What we are doing now should have been done sixteen or eighteen years ago."

"Or not at all," muttered Martin, but in a voice not meant to be overheard.

"I don't think so, sir," cried she, catching up his words, "if only as our protest against the insolence and ingratitude of this neighbourhood — of these creatures, who have actually been maintained by us! It was high time to show them their real condition, and to what they will be reduced when the influence of our position is withdrawn."

"If it were only for *that* we are going away——" And he stopped himself as he got thus far.

"In itself a good and sufficient reason, sir, but I trust there are others also. I should hope that we have paid our debt to patriotism, and that a family who have endured twenty years of banishment, may return, if only to take a passing glance at the world of civilization and refinement."

"And poor Mary!" exclaimed Martin, with deep feeling.

"Your niece might have come with us if she pleased, Mr. Martin. To remain here was entirely her own choice; not that I am at all disposed to think that her resolution was not a wise one. Miss Mary Martin feels very naturally her utter deficiency in all the graces and accomplishments which should pertain to her condition. She appreciates her unfitness for society, and selects—as I think with commendable discretion—a sphere much better adapted to her habits."

Martin again sighed heavily.

"To leave any other girl under such circumstances would have been highly improper," resumed her ladyship; "but she is really suited to this kind of life, and perfectly unfit for any other, and I have no doubt she and Catty Broon will be excellent company for each other."

"Catty loves her with all her heart," muttered Martin. And her ladyship's lip curled in silent derision at the thought of such affection. "And, after all," said he, half involuntarily, "our absence will be less felt so long as Molly stays behind."

"If you mean by that, Mr. Martin, that the same system of wasteful expenditure is still to continue—this universal employment scheme—I can only say I distinctly and flatly declare against it. Even Repton—and I'm sure he's no ally of mine—agrees with me in pronouncing it perfectly ruinous."

"There's no doubt of the cost of it," said Martin, gravely.

"Well, sir, and what other consideration should weigh with us?—I mean," added she, hastily, "what should have the same weight? The immaculate authority I have just quoted has limited our personal expenditure for next year to five thousand pounds, and threatens us with even less in future if the establishment at Cro' Martin cannot be reduced below its present standard; but I would be curious to know why there is such a thing as an establishment at Cro' Martin?"

"Properly speaking there is none," said Martin. "Repton alludes only to the workpeople—to those employed on the grounds and the gardens. We cannot let the place go to ruin."

"There is certainly no necessity for pineries and forcing-houses. Your niece is not likely to want grapes in January, or camelias in the early autumn. As little does she need sixteen carriage-horses and a stable full of hunters."

"They are to be sold off next week. Mary herself said that she only wanted two saddle-horses and the pony for the phaeton."

"Quite sufficient, I should say, for a young lady."

"I'm sure she'd have liked to have kept the harriers——"

"A pack of hounds! I really never heard the like!"

"Poor Molly! It was her greatest pleasure—I may say her only amusement in life. But she wouldn't hear of keeping them; and when Repton tried to persuade her——"

"Repton's an old fool—he's worse, he's downright dishonest—for he actually proposed my paying my maids out of my miserable pittance of eight hundred a year, and at the same moment suggests your niece retaining a pack of foxhounds!"

"Harriers, my lady."

"I don't care what they're called. It is too insolent."

"You may rely upon one thing," said Martin, with more firmness than he had hitherto used, "there will be nothing of extravagance in Mary's personal expenditure. If ever there was a girl indifferent to all the claims of self, she is that one."

"If we continue this discussion, sir, at our present rate, I opine that by the time we reach Dublin your niece will have become an angel."

Martin dropped his head, and was silent; and although her ladyship made two or three other efforts to revive the argument, he seemed resolved to decline the challenge, and so they rolled along the road sullen and uncommunicative.

In the second carriage were Repton and Kate Henderson—an arrangement which the old lawyer flatteringly believed he owed to his cunning and address, but which in reality was ordained by Lady Dorothea, whose notions of rank and precedence were rigid. Although Repton's greatest tact lay in his detection of character, he felt that he could not satisfactorily affirm he had mastered the difficulty in the present case. She was not exactly like anything he had met before; her mode of thought, and even some of her expressions were so different, that the old lawyer owned to himself, "It was like examining a witness through an interpreter."

A clever talker—your man of conversational success—is rarely patient under the failure of his powers, and, not very unreasonably perhaps, very ready to ascribe the ill-success to the defects of his hearer. They had not proceeded more than half of the first post ere Repton began to feel the incipient symptoms of this discontent.

She evidently had no appreciation for Bar anecdote and judicial wit; she took little interest in political events, and knew nothing of the country or its people. He tried the subject of foreign travel, but his own solitary trip to Paris and Brussels afforded but a meagre experience of continental life, and he was shrewd enough not to swim a yard out of his depth. "She must have her weak point, if I could but discover it," said he to himself. "It is not personal vanity, that I see. She does not want to be thought clever, nor even eccentric,—which is the governess failing *par excellence*;—what then can it be?" With all his ingenuity he could not discover! She would talk, and talk well, on any theme he started, but always like one who maintained conversation through politeness and not interest, and this very feature it was which piqued the old man's vanity, and irritated his self-love.

When he spoke, she replied, and always with a sufficient semblance of interest, but if he were silent, she never opened her lips.

"And so," said he, after a longer pause than usual, "you tell me that you really care little or nothing whither Fortune may be now conducting you."

"To one in my station it really matters very little," said she, calmly. "I don't suppose that the post-horses there have any strong preference for one road above another, if they be both equally level and smooth."

"There lies the very question," said he; "for you now admit that there may be a difference."

"I have never found in reality," said she, "that these differences were appreciable."

"How is it that one so young should be so——so philosophic?" said he, after a hesitation.

"Had you asked me that question in French, Mr. Repton, the language would have come so pleasantly to your aid, and spared you the awkwardness of employing a grand phrase for a small quality; but my 'philosophy' is simply this: that, to fill a station whose casualties range from courtesies in the drawing-room to slights from the servants' hall, one must arm themselves with very defensive armour, as much, nay more, against flattery than against sarcasm. If, in the course of time, this habit render one ungenial and uncompanionable, pray be lenient enough to ascribe the fault to the condition as much as to the individual."

"But, to be candid, I only recognise in you qualities the very opposite of all these; and, if I am to confess a smart at this moment, it is in feeling that I am not the man to elicit them."

"There you do me wrong. I should be very proud to captivate Mr. Repton."

"Now we are on the good road at last!" said he, gaily, "for Mr. Repton is dying to be captivated."

"The fortress that is only anxious to surrender offers no great glory to the conqueror," replied she.

"By Jove! I'm glad you're not at the Bar."

"If I had been, I could never have shown the same forbearance as Mr. Repton."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"I never could have refused a silk gown, sir; and they tell me you have done so!"

"Ah! they told you that," said he, colouring with pleasurable pride. "Well, it's quite true. The fact is correct, but I don't know what explanation they have given of it!"

"There was none, sir—or at least none that deserved the name."

"Then what was your own reading of it?" asked he.

"Simply this, sir: that a proud man may very well serve in he ranks, but spurn the grade of a petty officer."

"By Jove; it is strange to find that a young lady should understand one's motives better than an old Minister," said he, with an evident satisfaction.

"It would be unjust, sir, were I to arrogate any credit to my own perspicuity in this case," said she, hastily, "for I was aided in my judgment by what, very probably, never came under the Minister's eyes."

"And what was that?"

"A little volume which I discovered one day in the library, entitled 'Days of the Historical Society of Trinity College,' wherein I found Mr. Repton's name not only one of the first in debate, but the very first in enunciating the great truths of political liberty. In fact, I might go further and say, the only one who had the courage to proclaim the great principles of the French Revolution."

"Ah—yes. I was a boy—a mere boy—very rash—full of hope—full of enthusiasm," said Repton, with an embarrassment that increased at every word. "We all took fire from the great blaze beside us just then; but, my dear young lady, the flame has died out—very fortunately too—for if it hadn't it would have burned us up with it. We were wrong—wrong with Burke, to be sure—'Errare Platone,' as one may say—but still wrong."

"You were wrong, sir, in confounding casualties with true consequences—wrong as a physician would be who abandoned his treatment from mistaking the symptoms of disease for the effects of medicine. You set out by declaring there was a terrible malady to be treated, and you shrink back affrighted at the first results of your remedies; you did worse, you accommodated your change of principles to party, and from the great champions of liberty you descended to be—modern Whigs!"

"Why, what have we here? A Girondist, I verily believe!" said Repton, looking in her face, with a smile of mingled surprise and amazement.

"I don't much care for the name you may give me, but I am one who thinks that the work of the French Revolution is sure of its accomplishment. We shall very probably not do the thing in the same way, but it will be done, nevertheless; for an act of Parliament, though not so speedy, will be as effectual as a 'Noyade,' and a Reforming Administration will work as cleanly as a Constituent!"

"But see; look at France at this moment. Is not society reconstituted pretty near to the old models? What evidence is there that the prestige of rank has suffered from the shock of revolution?"

"The best evidence. Nobody believes in it—not one. Society is reconstituted just as a child constructs a card-house to see how high he can carry the frail edifice before it tumbles. The people—the true people of the Continent—look at the pageantry of a Court and a Nobility just as they do on a stage procession, and criticise it in the same spirit. They endure it so long as their indolence or their caprice permit, and then, some fine morning, they'll dash down the whole edifice; and be assured that the fragments of the broken toy will never suggest the sentiment to repair it."

"You are a Democrat of the first water!" exclaimed Repton, in half amazement.

"I am simply for the assertion of the truth everywhere and in everything—in religion and in politics, as in art and literature. If the people be the source of power, don't divert the stream into another channel; and, above all, don't insist that it should run up-hill! Come abroad, Mr. Repton—just come over with us to Paris—and see if what I am telling you be so far from the fact. You'll find, too, that it is not merely the low-born, the ignoble, and the poor who profess these opinions, but the great, the titled, and the wealthy men of fourteen quarterings and ancient lineage; and who, sick to death of a contest with a rich bourgeoisie, would rather start fair in the race again, and win whatever place their prowess or their capacity might give them. You'll hear very good socialism from the lips of Dukes and Princesses who swear by Fourrier."

Repton stared at her in silence, not more amazed at the words he heard than at the manner and air of her who spoke them; for she had gradually assumed a degree of earnestness and energy which imparted to her features a character of boldness and determination, such as he had not seen in them before.

"Yes," resumed she, as though following out her own thoughts, "it is your new creations, your ennobled banker, your starred and cordoned agitator of the Bourse, who now defends his order, and stands up for the divine right of misrule! The truly noble have other sentiments!"

"There's nothing surprises me so much," said Repton, at last, "as to hear these sentiments from one who has lived surrounded by all the blandishments of a condition that owes its existence to an aristocracy, and never could have arisen without one—who has lived that delightful life of refined leisure and elevating enjoyment, such as forms the atmosphere of only one class throughout the whole world. How would you bear to exchange this for the chaotic struggle that you point at?"

"As for me, sir, I only saw the procession from the window. I may, perhaps, walk in it when I descend to the street; but really," added she, laughing, "this is wandering very far out of the record. I had promised myself to captivate Mr. Repton, and here I am, striving to array every feeling of his heart and every prejudice of his mind against me."

"It is something like five-and-fifty years since I last heard such sentiments as you have just uttered," said Repton, gravely. "I was young and ardent—full of that hopefulness in mankind which is, after all, the life-blood of Republicanism—and here I am now, an old, time-hardened lawyer, with very little faith in any one. How do you suppose that such opinions can chime in with all I have witnessed in the interval?"

"Come over to Paris, sir," was her reply.

"And I would ask nothing better," rejoined he. "Did I ever tell you of what Harry Parsons said to Macnatty when he purposed visiting France, after the peace of '15? 'Now is the time to see the French capital,' said Mac. 'I'll put a guinea in one pocket and a shirt in the other, and start to-morrow.'—'Ay, sir,' said Parsons, 'and never change either till you come back again!'"

Once back in his accustomed field, the old lawyer went along recounting story after story, every name seeming to suggest its own anecdote. Nor was Kate, now, an ungenerous listener; on the contrary, she relished his stores of wit and repartee. Thus they, too, went on their journey!

The third carriage contained Madame Hortense, Lady Dorothea's French maid; Mrs. Runt, an inferior dignitary of the toilet; and Mark Peddar, Mr. Martin's "Gentleman"—a party which, we are forced to own, seemed to combine more elements of sociality than were gathered together in the vehicles that preceded them. To *their* share there were no regrets for leaving home—no sorrow at quitting a spot endeared to them by long association. The sentiment was one of unalloyed satisfaction They were escaping from the gloom of a long exile, and about to issue forth into that world which they longed for as eagerly as their betters. And why should they not? Are not all its pleasures, all its associations, more essentially adapted to such natures; and has solitude one single compensation for all its depression to such as these?

"Our noble selves," said Mr. Peddar, filling the ladies' glasses, and then his own, for a very appetising luncheon was there spread out before them, and four bottles of long-necked gracefulness rose from amidst the crystal ruins of a well-filled ice-pail. "Mam'selle, it is your favourite tipple, and deliciously cool."

"Perfection," replied mademoiselle, with a foreign accent, for she had been long in England, "and I never enjoyed it more. Au revoir," added she, waving her hand towards the tall towers of Cro' Martin, just visible above the trees—"au revoir!"

"Just so—till I see you again," said Mrs. Runt; "and I'm sure I'll take good care that day won't come soon. It seems like a terrible nightmare when I think of the eight long years I passed there."

"Et moi, twelve! Miladi engage me, so to say, provisoirement, to come to Ireland, but with a promise of travel abroad; that we live in Paris, Rome, Naples—que sais-je? I accept—I arrive—et me voici!" And mademoiselle threw back her veil, the better to direct attention to the ravages time and exile had made upon her charms.

"Hard lines, ma'am," said Peddar, whose sympathy must not be accused of an "équivoque," "and here am I, that left the best single-handed situation in all England, Sir Augustus Hawleigh's, a young fellow just of age, and that never knew what money was, to come down here at a salary positively little better than a country curate's, and live the life of—of—what shall I say?——"

"No—the leg, if you please, Mr. Peddar; no more wine. Well, just one glass, to drink a hearty farewell to the old house."

"I'm sure I wish Mary joy of her residence there," said Peddar, adjusting his cravat; she is a devilish fine girl, and might do better, though."

"She has no ambitions—no what you call them?—no aspirations for 'le grand monde;' so perhaps she has reason to stay where she is."

"But with a young fellow of ton and fashion, mam'selle—a fellow who has seen life—to guide and bring her out, trust me there are excellent capabilities in that girl." And as Mr. Peddar enunciated the sentiment, his hands ran carelessly through his hair, and performed a kind of impromptu toilet.

"She do dress herself bien mal."

"Disgracefully so," chimed in Mrs. Runt. "I believe, whenever she bought a gown, her first thought was what it should turn into when she'd done with it."

"I thought that la Henderson might have taught her something," said Peddar affectedly.

"Au contraire—she like to make the contrast more strong; she always seek to make say—'Regardez, mademoiselle, see what a tournure is there!'"

"Do you think her handsome, Mr. Peddar?" asked Mrs. Runt.

"Handsome, yes; but not *my* style—not one of what *I* call *my* women; too much of this kind of thing, eh?" And he drew his head back, and threw into his features an expression of exaggerated scorn.

"Just so. Downright impudent, I'd call it."

"Not even that," said Mr. Peddar, pondering; "haughty, rather—a kind of don't-think-to-come-it-on-me style of look, eh?"

"Not at all amiable—point de cela," exclaimed mam'selle; "but still, I will say, très bon genre. You see at a glance that she has seen la bonne société.

"Which, after all, is the same all the world over," said Peddar, dogmatically. "At Vienna we just saw the same people we used to have with us in London; at Rome, the same; so, too, at Naples. I assure you that the last time I dined at Dolgorouki's, I proposed going in the evening to the Haymarket. I quite forgot we were on the Neva. And when Prince Gladuatoffski's gentleman said, 'Where shall I set you down?' I answered, carelessly, 'At my chambers in the Albany, or anywhere your Highness likes near that.' Such is life!" exclaimed he, draining the last of the champagne into his glass.

"The place will be pretty dull without us, I fancy," said Mrs. Runt, looking out at the distant landscape.

"That horrid old Mother Broon won't say so," said Peddar, laughing. "By Jove! if it was only to escape that detestable hag, it's worth while getting away."

"I offer her my hand when I descend the steps, but she refuse 'froidement,' and say, 'I wish you as much pleasure as you leave behind you.' Pas mal for such a 'créature.'"

"I didn't even notice her," said Mrs. Runt.

"Ma foi, I was good with all the world; I was in such joy—such spirits—that I forgave all and everything. I felt 'nous sommes en route,' and Paris—dear Paris—before us."

"My own sentiments to a T," said Mr. Peddar. "Let me live on the Boulevards, have my cab, my stall at the Opera, two Naps. per diem for my dinner, and I'd not accept Mary Martin's hand if she owned Cro' Martin, and obliged me to live in it."

The speech was fully and warmly acknowledged, other subjects were started, and so they travelled the same road as their betters, and perhaps with lighter hearts.

CHAPTER XXV.

A COUNTRY AUCTION.

WITH feelings akin to those with which the populace of a revolted city invade the once sacred edifice of the deposed prince, the whole town and neighbourhood of Oughterard now poured into the demesne of Cro' Martin, wandered through the grounds, explored the gardens, and filled the house. An immense advertisement in the local papers had announced a general sale of horses and carriages, farming stock, and agricultural implements; cattle of choice breeding, sheep of fabulous facilities for fat, and cows of every imaginable productiveness, were there, with draft-horses, like dwarf elephants, and bulls that would have puzzled a Matador.

The haughty state in which the Martins habitually lived, the wide distance by which they separated themselves from the neighbourhood around, had imparted to Cro' Martin a kind of dreamy splendour in the country, exalting even its well-merited claims to admiration. Some had seen the grounds, a few had by rare accident visited the gardens, but the house and the stables were still unexplored territories, of whose magnificence each spoke without a fear of contradiction.

Country neighbourhoods are rarely rich in events, and of these, few can rival a great auction. It is not alone in the interests of barter and gain thus suggested, but in the thousand new channels for thought thus suddenly opened—the altered fortunes of him whose effects have come to the hammer; his death, or his banishment—both so much alike. The visitor wanders amidst objects which have occupied years in collection: some, the results of considerable research and difficulty; some, the long-coveted acquisitions of half a lifetime; and some—we have known such—the fond gifts of friendship. There they are now side by side in the catalogue, their private histories no more suspected than those of them who lie grass-covered in the churchyard. You admire that highly-bred hunter in all the beauty of his symmetry and his strength, but you never think of the "little Shelty" in the next stable with shaggy mane and flowing tail; and yet it was on *him* the young heir used to ride; *he* was the cherished animal of all the stud, led in beside the breakfast-table to be caressed and petted, fed with sugar from fair fingers, and patted by hands a Prince might have knelt to kiss! His rider now sleeps beneath the marble slab in the old aisle, and they who once brightened in smiles at the sound of his tiny trot would burst into tears did they behold that pony!

So, amidst the triumphs of colour and design that grace the walls, you have no eyes for a little sketch in water-colour—a mill, a shealing beside a glassy brook, a few trees, and a moss-clad rock; and yet that little drawing reveals a sad story. It is all that remains of her who went abroad to die. You throw yourself in listless lassitude upon a couch: it was the work of one who beguiled over it the last hours of a broken heart! You turn your steps to the conservatory, but never notice the little flower-garden, whose narrow walks, designed for tiny feet, need not the little spade to tell of the child-gardener who tilled it.

Ay, this selling-off is a sad process! It bespeaks the disruption of a home; the scattering of those who once sat around the same hearth, with all the dear familiar things about them!

It was a bright spring morning—one of those breezy, cloud-flitting days, with flashes of gay sunlight alternating with broad shadows, and giving in the tamest landscape every effect the painter's art could summon—that a long procession, consisting of all imaginable vehicles, with many on horseback intermixed, wound their way beneath the grand entrance and through the park of Cro' Martin. Such an opportunity of gratifying long pent-up curiosity had never before offered; since, even when death itself visited the mansion, the habits of exclusion were not relaxed, but the Martins went to their graves in the solemn state of their households alone, and were buried in a little chapel within the grounds, the faint tolling of the bell alone announcing to the world without that one of a proud house had departed.

The pace of the carriages was slow as they moved along, their occupants preferring to linger in a scene from which they had been hitherto excluded, struck by the unexpected beauty of the spot, and wondering at all the devices by which it was adorned. A few—a very few—had seen the place in boyhood, and were puzzling themselves to recal this and that memory; but all agreed in pronouncing that the demesne was far finer, the timber better grown, and the fields more highly cultivated than anything they had ever before seen.

"I call this the finest place in Ireland, Dan!" said Captain Bodkin, as he rode beside Nelligan's car, halting every now and then to look around him. "There's everything can make a demesne beautiful—wood, water, and mountain!"

"And, better than all, a fine system of farming," broke in Nelligan; "that's the best field of 'swedes' I ever beheld!"

"And to think that a man would leave this to go live abroad in a dirty town in France!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinch, from the opposite side of the car. "That's perverseness indeed!"

"Them there is all Swiss cows!" said Mr. Clinch, in an humble tone.

"Not one of them, Clinch! they're Alderneys. The Swiss farm, as they call it, is all on the other side, with the ornamented cottage."

"Dear! dear! there was no end to their waste and extravagance!" muttered Mrs. Nelligan.

"Wait till you see the house, ma'am, and you'll say so, indeed," said the captain.

"I don't think we're likely!" observed Nelligan, drily.

"Why so?"

"Just that Scanlan told Father Mather the auction would be held in the stables, for as there was none of the furniture to be sold the house wouldn't be opened."

"That's a great disappointment!" exclaimed Bodkin. A sentiment fully concurred in by the ladies, who both declared that they'd never have come so far only to look at pigs and "short horns."

"Maybe we'll get a peep at the gardens," said Bodkin, endeavouring to console them.

"And the sow!" broke in Peter Hayes, who had joined the party some time before. "They tell me she's a beauty. She's Lord Somebody's breed, and beats the world for fat!"

"Here's Scanlan, now, and he'll tell us everything," said Bodkin. But the sporting attorney, mounted on a splendid little horse, in top condition, passed them at speed, the few words he uttered being lost as he dashed by.

"What was it he said?" cried Bodkin.

"I didn't catch the words," replied Nelligan; "and I suppose it was no great loss."

"He's an impudent upstart!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinch.

"I think he said something about a breakfast," meekly interposed Mr. Clinch.

"And of course he said nothing of the kind," retorted his spouse. "You never happened to be right in your life!"

"Faix! I made sure of mine before I started," said old Hayes. "I ate a cowld goose!"

"Well, to be sure, they couldn't be expected to entertain all that's coming!" said Mrs. Nelligan, who now began a mental calculation of the numbers on the road.

"There will be a thousand people here to-day," said Bodkin.

"Five times that," said Nelligan. "I know it by the number of small bills that I gave cash for the last week. There's not a farmer in the county doesn't expect to bring back with him a prize beast of one kind or other."

"I'll buy that sow if she goes 'reasonable,'" said Peter Hayes, whose whole thoughts seemed centered on the animal in question.

"What do they mean to do when they sell off the stock?" asked the captain.

"I hear that the place will be let," said Nelligan, in a half whisper, "if they can find a tenant for it. Henderson told Father Maher, that come what might, her ladyship would never come back here."

"Faix! the only one of them worth a groat was Miss Mary, and I suppose they didn't leave her the means to do much, now."

"'Tis she must have the heavy heart to-day," sighed Mrs. Nelligan.

"And it is only fair and reasonable she should have her share of troubles, like the rest of us," replied Mrs. Clinch. "When Clinch was removed from Macroon we had to sell off every stick and stone we had; and as the neighbours knew we must go, we didn't get five shillings in the pound by the sale."

"That's mighty grand—that is really a fine place!" exclaimed Bodkin, as by a sudden turn of the road they came directly in front of the house; and the whole party sat in silent admiration of the magnificent edifice before them.

"It is a Royal Palace—no less," said Nelligan, at last; "and it is exactly what no country gentleman wants. Sure we know well there's no fortune equal to such a residence. To keep up that house, as it ought to be, a man should have thirty thousand a year."

"Give me fifteen, Dan, and you'll see if I don't make it comfortable," said Bodkin.

"What's this barrier here—can't we go any further?" exclaimed Nelligan, as he perceived a strong paling across the avenue.

"We're to go round by the stables, it seems," said Bodkin; "the Hall entrance is not to be invaded by such vulgar visitors. This is our road, here."

"Well, if I ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinch, whose feelings really overpowered utterance.

"I don't see any great hardship in this after all, ma'am," said Nelligan, "for we know if the family were at home we couldn't even be here. Drive on, Tim."

A short circuit through a very thickly-wooded tract brought them at length to a large and massive gateway, over which the Martins' arms were sculptured in stone; passing through which they entered a great court-yard, three sides of which were occupied by stables, the fourth presenting a range of coach-houses filled with carriages of every description.

A large tent was erected in the midst of the court for the convenience of the sale, in front of which were pens for the cattle, and a space railed off, wherein the horses were to be viewed and examined.

"This is all mighty well arranged," said Bodkin, as he gave his horse to a groom, who, in the undress livery of Cro' Martin, came respectfully to his aid as he got down.

"The sale will begin in about an hour, sir," said the man, in answer to a question. "Mr. Scanlan is now in the house with Mr. Gibbs, the auctioneer."

Vast crowds of people of every class, from the small Squire to the Oughterard shopkeeper and country farmer, now came pouring in, all eager in their curiosity, but somehow all subdued into a kind of reverence for a spot from which they had been so rigidly excluded, and the very aspect of which so far transcended expectations. Everything, indeed, was an object of wonderment. The ornamental tanks for watering the horses, supplied by beautifully-designed fountains; the sculptured medallions along the walls, emblematising the chase, or the road; the bright mahogany partitions of the stalls, even to the little channels, lined with shining copper, all demanded notice and comment; and many were the wise reflections uttered with regard to those who thus squandered away their wealth. The sight of the cattle, however, which occupied this luxurious abode, went far to disarm this criticism, since certainly none ever seemed more worthy of the state and splendour that surrounded them. For these the admiration was hearty and sincere, and the farmers went along the stalls amazed and wonderstruck at the size and symmetry of the noble animals that filled them.

"To be sold at Tattersall's, sir, on the 4th of next month," said a groom, whose English accent imparted an almost sneer to the supposition that such a stud should meet purchasers in Ireland. "They're all advertised in *Bell's Life.*"

"What becomes of the hounds?" asked Bodkin.

"Lord Cromore takes them, sir; they're to hunt in Dorsetshire."

"And the sow?" asked old Hayes, with eagerness; "she isn't to go to England, is she?"

"Can't say, sir. We don't look arter no sows here," replied the fellow, as he turned away in evident disgust at his questioner.

A certain stir and bustle in the court without gave token that the sale was about to begin, and Scanlan's voice, in its most authoritative tone, was heard issuing orders and directions on all sides, while servants went hither and thither distributing catalogues, and securing accommodation for the visitors with a degree of deference and attention most remarkable.

"I suppose we're to pass the day in the stables, or the cowhouses, ma'am?" said Mrs. Clinch, as with a look of indignation she gazed at the range of seats now being hastily occupied by a miscellaneous company.

"If we could only get into the gardens," said Mrs. Nelligan, timidly. "I'm sure if I saw Barnes he'd let us in." And she slipped rapidly from her friends arm, and hastily crossing the court, went in search of her only acquaintance in the household. "Did you see Barnes? Where could I find Barnes? asked she of almost every one she met. And following the complicated directions she received, she wandered onward, through a kitchen-garden, and into a small nursery beyond it. Bewildered as she receded beyond the sounds of the multitude, she turned into a little path which, traversing a shrubbery, opened upon a beautifully-cultivated "parterre," whose close-shaven sward and flowery beds flanked a long range of windows opening to the ground, and which, to her no small horror, she perceived to form one wing of the mansion. While in her distraction to think what course was best to take, she saw a groom standing at the head of a small pony, harnessed to a diminutive carriage, and hastily approached him. Before, however, she had attained within speaking distance, the man motioned to her, by a gesture, to retire. Her embarrassment gave her, if not courage, something of resolution, and she advanced.

"Go back!" cried he, in a smothered voice; "there's no one admitted here."

"But I've lost my way. I was looking for Barnes——"

"He's not here. Go back, I say," reiterated the man, in the same stealthy voice.

But poor Mrs. Nelligan came on, confusion rendering her indifferent to all reproof, and in spite of gestures and admonitions to retire, steadily advanced towards the door. As she passed one of the open windows, her glance caught something within; she stopped suddenly, and, in seeming shame at her intrusion, turned to go back. A muttered malediction from the servant increased her terror, and she uttered a faint cry. In an instant, the object at which she had been gazing arose, and Mary Martin, her face traced with recent tears, started up and approached her. Mrs. Nelligan felt a sense of sickly faintness come over her, and had to grasp the window for support.

"Oh, my dear young lady!" she muttered, "I didn't mean to do this—I strayed here by accident—I didn't know where I was going——"

"My dear Mrs. Nelligan, there is no need of these excuses," said Mary, taking her hand cordially, and leading her to a seat. "It is a great pleasure to me to see a friendly face, and I am grateful for the chance that sent you here."

Mrs. Nelligan, once relieved of her first embarrassment, poured forth with volubility the explanation of her presence; and Mary heard her to the end with patient politeness.

"And you were going away somewhere," resumed she, "when I stopped you. I see your pony-chaise there at the door waiting for you, and you're off to the quarries, or Kilkieran, I'll be bound; or maybe it's only going away you are, to be out of this for a day or two. God knows, I don't wonder at it! It is a trying scene for you, and a great shock to your feelings, to see the place dismantled, and everything sold off!"

"It is sad enough," said Mary, smiling through her tears.

"Not to say that you're left here all alone, just as if you weren't one of the family at all; that's what I think most of. And where were you going, dear?"

"I was going to pass a few days at the Cottage—the Swiss Cottage. Catty Broon, my old nurse, has gone over there to get it in readiness for me, and I shall probably stay there till all this confusion be over."

"To be sure, dear. What's more natural than that you'd like to spare your feelings, seeing all carried away just as if it was bankrupts you were. Indeed, Dan said to me the things wouldn't bring more than at a sheriff's sale, because of the hurry you were in to sell them off."

"My uncles orders were positive on that subject," said Mary calmly.

"Yes, dear, of course he knows best," said she, with a shake of the head not exactly corroborating her own speech. "And how are you to live here by yourself, dear?" resumed she; "sure you'll die of the loneliness!"

"I don't think so: I shall have plenty to occupy me—more, indeed, than I shall be equal to."

"Ay, in the daytime; but the long evenings—think of the long evenings, dear! God knows, I find them very often dreary enough, even though I have a home and Dan."

"I'm not afraid of the long evenings, my dear Mrs. Nelligan. It is the only time I can spare for reading; they will be my hours of recreation and amusement."

"Well, well, I hope so, with all my heart," said she, doubtingly. "You know yourself best, and maybe you'd be happier that way, than if you had somebody to talk to and keep you company."

"I didn't say that," said Mary, smiling. "I never implied that a visit from some kind friend—Mrs. Nelligan, for instance —would not be a very pleasant event in my solitude."

"To come and see you—to come to Cro' Martin!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelligan, as though trying to reconcile her mind to the bare possibility of such a circumstance.

"If you would not think it too far, or too much trouble——"

"Oh dear, oh dear, but it's too much honour it would be; and Dan—no matter what he'd say to the contrary—would feel it so, in his own heart. Sure I know well how he felt about Joe being asked here to dinner; and he'd never have taken a part against your uncle in the election, if it wasn't that he thought Joe was slighted some way——"

"But nothing of the kind ever occurred. Mr. Joseph Nelligan met from us all the respect that his character and his talents entitled him to."

"Don't get warm about it, or I'll forget everything that's in my head!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelligan, in terror at the eagerness of Mary's manner. "Maybe it was Joe's fault—maybe it was young Massingbred's—maybe it was——"

"But what was it?" cried Mary—"what was alleged? what was laid to our charge?"

"There, now, I don't remember anything; you frightened me so, that it's gone clean out of my mind."

"My dear friend," said Mary, caressingly, "I never meant to alarm you, and let us talk of something else. You say that you'll come to see me sometimes——is it a promise?"

"Indeed it is, my dear, whenever Dan give sme the car and horse——"

"But I'll drive in for you, and bring you safely back again. You've only to say when you'll spend the day with me—and there's so much to show you here that you'd like to see. The gardens are really handsome, and the hothouses. And Catty will show us her dairy, and I am very proud of my lambs."

"It is all like a dream to me—just like a dream," said Mrs. Nelligan, closing her eyes, and folding her arms, "to think that I'm sitting here, at Cro' Martin, talking to Miss Mary just as if I were her equal."

"My dear, dear friend, it shall be a reality whenever you like to make it so; and you'll tell me all the news of Oughterard—all about every one there, for I know them, at least by name, and will be charmed to hear about them."

"Mr. Scanlan wants an answer, miss, immediately," said a servant, presenting Mary with a few lines written in pencil."

She opened the paper and read the following: "Nelligan offers seventy pounds for the two black horses. Is he to have them? Sir Peter shows an incipient spavin on the off leg, and I think he'd be well sold."

"Tell Mr. Scanlan I'll send him an answer by-and-by," said she, dismissing the servant. Then ringing the bell, she whispered a few words to the man who answered it. "I have just sent a message to tell Mr. Nelligan I wish to speak to him," said she, resuming her place on the sofa. "It is a mere business matter," added she, seeing that Mrs. Nelligan waited for some explanation. "And now, when have you heard from your son? Is he learning to spare himself anything of those great efforts he imposes upon his faculties?"

This was to touch the most sensitive chord in all her heart, and so she burst forth into a description of Joseph's daily life of toil and study; his labours, his self-denial, his solitary, joyless existence, all calling up in turn her praises and her sympathy.

"And I," cried she, "am always saying, what is it all for?—what's the use of it?—who is to be the better of it? Sure there's only himself to get whatever his father leaves behind him; and a pretty penny it is! Not that *you* would think so; but for the like of *us*, and in *our* station, it's a snug fortune. He'll have upwards of two thousand a year, so that there's no need to be slaving like a Turk."

"Your son's ambitions take, very probably, a higher range than mere money-making," said Mary. "He has a good right to suppose that his abilities may win him the highest of rewards! But here's Mr. Nelligan." And she advanced courteously to meet him at the door.

Flushed and heated by the scene he had just quitted, and evidently embarrassed by the situation in which he stood, Nelligan bowed repeatedly in reply to Miss Martin's greeting, starting with amazement as he perceived Mrs. Nelligan, who maintained an air of unbroken dignity on the sofa.

"Well you may stare, Dan!" said she. "I'm sure you never expected to see me here!"

"It was a most agreeable surprise for *me*, at least," said Mary, motioning to a seat; then, turning to Nelligan, added, "This little note was the occasion of my asking you to step over here. Will you please to read it?"

"How handsome—how candid, Miss Martin!" said Nelligan, as he restored it, after perusing it. "Ah, my dear young lady, why wouldn't your family deal always with us in this fashion and in everything! I beg your forgiveness but I forgot myself. I'll stick to my offer, Miss—I wouldn't take fifty pounds for my bargain!"

"This, of course, is in confidence between us, sir," said Mary, as she tore up the note and threw the fragments on the ground.

"I wish I knew how to acknowledge this, Miss Martin. I wish I could show how sensible one in *my* station could be of generosity from one in *yours*."

"You remind me very opportunely that I have a favour to ask, Mr. Nelligan. It is this: My kind friend here, Mrs. Nelligan, has just promised to take pity on my solitude, and occasionally to come and see me. Will you kindly strengthen her in this benevolent intention, and aid her to turn her steps very often towards Cro' Martin?"

Nelligan's face grew deeply red, and an expression of the greatest embarrassment settled down on his features, and it was with much difficulty, and in a voice labouring for utterance, that he said:

"I don't see how this can be. Your friends would not approve—your family, I mean, Miss Martin—would, very naturally, resent the thought of such an intimacy! They look upon *me* as an enemy—an open and declared enemy—and so I am, where politics is concerned—but——" He hesitated, and after a struggle went on: "No matter, it *is* war between us, and must be till one crushes the other. What I mean is this, young lady, that to encourage such acquaintanceship as you speak of would look like an undue condescension on *your* part, or something even worse on *ours*."

"I'll not listen to such subtleties!" cried Mary, hastily. "Neither you nor I, my dear Mrs. Nelligan, care for party triumphs or defeats. There are a thousand themes wherein our hearts can feel alike—and these we'll discuss together. We're of the same country—have passed our lives amidst the same scenes, the same events, and the same people—and it will be hard if we cannot as easily discover topics for mutual esteem, as subjects of difference and disagreement."

"But will it not be hinted, Miss Martin, that we took the opportunity of your solitude here to impose an acquaintanceship which had been impossible under other circumstances?"

"If you are too proud, sir, to know me—lest an ungenerous sneer should damage your self-esteem——"

"Indeed, indeed we're not," broke in Mrs. Nelligan. "You don't know Dan at all. He wouldn't exchange the honour of sitting there, opposite you, to be High Sheriff."

A servant fortunately presented himself at this awkward moment with a whispered message for Miss Martin; to which she replied aloud:

"Of course. Tell Mr. Scanlan it is my wish—*my* orders," added she, more firmly. "The house is open to any one who desires to see it. And now, before I go, Mr. Nelligan, tell me that I have convinced you—tell me that my reasons have prevailed, and that you acknowledge we ought to be friends. And, as she said the last words, she held out her hand to him with a grace so perfect, and an air of such winning fascination, that old Nelligan could only stammer out:

"It shall be how you please. I never bargained to dispute against such odds as this. We are, indeed, your friends; dispose of us how you like." And, so saying, he conducted her to the little carriage, and, assisting her to her seat, took his leave with all the respect he could have shown a Queen.

"It's more than a prejudice, after all," muttered he, as he looked after her as she drove away. "There's something deeper and stronger in it than that, or else a few words, spoken by a young girl, couldn't so suddenly rout all the sentiments of a lifetime! Ay, ay," added he, still to himself, "we may pull them down—we may humble them—but we'll never fill their places!"

"And we're to see the house, it seems!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelligan, gathering her shawl around her.

"I don't care to look at it till she herself is here!" said old Nelligan, taking his wife's arm, and leading her away across the lawn, and in the direction of the stables. There was that in his moody preoccupation which did not encourage her to venture on a word, and so, she went along at his side in silence.

"You're to have the black horses, Mr. Nelligan," said Scanlan, overtaking him. Nelligan nodded. "You've got a cheap pair of nags, and as good as gold," continued he. A dry half smile was all the reply. "Mr. Martin bred them himself," Scanlan went on, "and no price would have bought them three weeks ago; but everything is going for a song to-day! I don't know how I'll muster courage to tell them the results of the sale!"

"You'll have courage for more than that," said Nelligan. And, although only a chance shot, it fell into a magazine, for Scanlan grew crimson and then pale, and seemed ready to faint.

Nelligan stared with amazement at the effect his few words had produced, and then passed on, while the attorney muttered between his teeth: "Can he suspect me? Is it possible that I have betrayed myself?"

No, Maurice Scanlan. Be of good cheer; your secret is safe. No one has as much as the very barest suspicion that the pettyfogging practitioner aspires to the hand of Mary Martin; nor even in the darkest dreams of that house's downfal has such a humiliation obtruded itself anywhere!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"REVERSES."

OURS is a very practical age, and no matter how skilfully a man play the game of life, there is but one test of his ability—did he win? If this condition attend him, his actions meet charitable construction—his doings are all favourably regarded; and while his capacity is extolled, even his short-comings are extenuated. We dread an unlucky man! There is a kind of contagion in calamity, and we shun him as though he were plague-stricken! But with what flatteries we greet the successful one! That he reached the goal is the sure guarantee of his merits, and woe to him who would canvass the rectitude of his progress! Defeat is such a leveller! Genius and dulness, courage and pusillanimity, high-hearted hope and wasting energy, are all confounded together by failure, and the world would only smile at any effort to discriminate between them. Perhaps in the main the system works well—perhaps mankind, incapable of judging motives—too impatient to investigate causes—is wise in adopting a short cut for its decisions. Certain it is, the rule is absolute that proclaims Success to be Desert!

Lady Dorothea was now about to experience this severe lesson, and not the less heavily that she never anticipated it. After a wearisome journey the Martins arrived in Dublin. The apartments secured to them, by a previous letter, at Bilton's, were all in readiness for their reception. The "Saunders" of the day duly chronicled their arrival; but there the great event seemed to terminate. No message from her ladyship's noble kinsman greeted their coming—no kind note of welcome—not even a visit from Mr. Lawrence Belcour, the aide-de-camp in waiting. The greatest of all moralists warns us against putting confidence in Princes; and how doubly truthful is the adage when extended to Viceroys! Small as was the borough of Oughterard, and insignificant as seemed the fact who should be its representative, the result of the election was made a great matter at the "Castle." His excellency was told that the Martins had mismanaged everything—they had gone to work in the old Tory cut-and-thrust fashion of former days—conciliated no interest, won over no antagonism. They had acted "precisely as if there had been no Relief Bill"—we steal Colonel Massingbred's words—and they were beaten—beaten in their own town—in the person of one of their own family, and by a stranger! The Viceroy was vexed. They had misconstrued every word of his letter—a letter that, as he said, any child might have understood—and there was a vote lost to his party. It was in vain that the Chief Secretary assured his excellency, "Jack was a clever fellow, who'd put all to rights;" that with a little time and a little dexterity he'd be able to vote with the Ministry on every important division; the great fact remained unatoned for—his family, his own connexions, "had done nothing for him."

The first day in town dragged its length slowly over. Martin was fatigued, and did not go abroad, and no one came to visit him. To do him justice, he was patient under the neglect; to say more, he was grateful for it. It was so pleasant "to be let alone;" not even to be obliged to see Henderson, nor to be consulted about "Road Sessions" or "Police Reports," but to have one's day in total unbroken listlessness; to have simply to say, "We'll dine at seven," and "I'm out for every one." Far otherwise fared it in my "lady's chamber." All her plans had been based upon the attentions she was so certain of receiving, but of which, now, not a sign gave token. She passed the day in a state of almost feverish excitement, the more painful from her effort to conceal and control it. Repton dined with them. He came that day, "because, of course, he could not expect to catch them disengaged on any future occasion." Her ladyship was furious at the speech, but smiled concurrence to it, while Martin carelessly remarked, "From all that I see, we may enjoy the same pleasure very often." Never was the old lawyer so disagreeable when exerting himself to be the opposite. He had come stored with all the doings of the capital—its dinners and evening parties, its "mots," and its gossip. From the political rumours and the chit-chat of society, he went on to speak of the viceregal court and its festivities.

"If there be anything I detest," said her ladyship, at last, "it is the small circle of a very small metropolis. So long as you look at it carelessly, it is not so offensive; but when you stoop to consider and examine it with attention, it reminds you of the hideous spectacle of a glass of water as seen through a magnifier—you detect a miniature world of monsters and deformities, all warring and worrying each other." And with this flattering exposition of her opinion she arose speedily after dinner, and, followed by Miss Henderson, retired.

"I perceive that we had not the ear of the Court for our argument," said Repton, as he resumed his place after conducting her to the door. Martin sipped his wine in silence. I never expected she'd like Dublin. It only suits those who pass their lives in it; but I fancied, that what with Castle civilities——"

"There's the rub," broke in Martin, but in a voice subdued almost to a whisper. "They've taken no notice of us. For my own part, I'm heartily obliged to them; and if they'd condescend to feel offended with us, I'd only be more grateful; but my lady——"

"A long, low whistle from Repton implied that he had fully appreciated the "situation."

"Ah, I see it," cried he; and this explains the meaning of an article I read this morning in the *Evening Post*—the Government organ—wherein it is suggested that country gentlemen would be more efficient supporters of the Administration if they lent themselves heartily to comprehend the requirements of recent legislation, than by exacting heavy reprisals on their tenants in moments of defeat and disappointment."

"Well it is rather hard," said Martin, with more of energy than he usually spoke in —"it *is* hard! They first hounded us on to contest the borough for them, and they now abuse us that we did not make a compromise with the opposite party. And as to measures of severity, you know well I never concurred in them—I never permitted them."

"But they are mistaken, nevertheless. There are writs in preparation, and executions about to issue over fourteen townlands. There will be a general clearance of the population at Kyle-a-Noe. You'll not know a face there when you go back, Martin!"

"Who can say that I'll ever go back?" said he, mournfully.

"Come, come, I trust you will. I hope to pass some pleasant days with you there ere I die," said Repton, cheeringly. "Indeed, until you are there again, I'll never go farther west than Athlone on my circuit. "I'd not like to look at the old place without you!"

Martin nodded as he raised his glass, as if to thank him, and then dropped his head mournfully, and sat without speaking.

"Poor dear Mary!" said he, at last, with a heavy sigh. "Our desertion of her is too bad! It's not keeping the pledge I made to Barry!"

"Well, well, there's nothing easier than the remedy. A week or so will see you settled in some city abroad—Paris, or Brussels, perhaps. Let her join you; I'll be her escort. Egad! I'd like the excuse for the excursion," replied Repton, gaily.

"Ay, Repton," said the other, pursuing his own thoughts and not heeding the interruption, "and *you* know what a brother he was. By Jove!" cried he, aloud, "were Barry just to see what we've done—how we've treated the place—the people—his daughter!—were he only to know how I've kept my word with him—— Look, Repton," added he, grasping the other's arm as he spoke, "there's not as generous a fellow breathing as Barry—this world has not his equal for an act of noble self-devotion and sacrifice. His life!—he'd not think twice of it if I asked him to give it for me; but if he felt—if he could just awaken to the conviction that he was unfairly dealt with—that when believing he was sacrificing to affection and brotherly love he was made a dupe and a fool of——"

"Be cautious, Martin; speak lower—remember where you are," said Repton, guardedly.

"I tell you this," resumed the other, in a tone less loud but not less forcible, "the very warmth of his nature—that same noble, generous source that feeds every impulse of his life—would supply the force of a torrent to his passion; he'd be a tiger if you aroused him!"

"Don't you perceive, my dear friend," said Repton, calmly, "how you are exaggerating everything—not alone *your own* culpability, but his resentment! Grant that you ought not to have left Mary behind you—I'm sure I said everything I could against it—what more easy than to repair the wrong?"

"No, no, Repton, you're quite mistaken. Take my word for it, you don't know that girl. She has taught herself to believe that her place is there—that it is her duty to live amongst the people. She may exaggerate to her own mind the good she does—she may fancy a thousand things as to the benefit she bestows—but she cannot, by any self-deception, over-estimate the results upon her own heart, which she has educated to feel as only they do who live amongst the poor! To take her away from this would be a cruel sacrifice, and for what?—a world she wouldn't care for, couldn't comprehend."

"Then what was to have been done?"

"I'll tell you, Repton; if it was *her* duty to stay there, it was doubly *ours* to have remained also. When she married," added he, after a pause—"when she had got a home of her own—then, of course, it would have been quite different! Heaven knows," said he, sighing, "we have little left to tie us to anything or anywhere; and as to myself, it is a matter of the most perfect indifference whether I drag out the year or two that may remain to me on the shores of Galway or beside the Adriatic!"

"I can't bear this," cried Repton, angrily. "If ever there was a man well treated by fortune you are he."

"I'm not complaining."

"Not complaining! but, hang it, sir, that is not enough! You should be overflowing with gratitude; your life ought to be active with benevolence; you should be up and doing, wherever ample means and handsome encouragement could assist merit or cheer despondency. I like your notion that you don't complain! Why, if you did, what should be done by those who really do travel the shady side of existence?—who are weighted with debt, bowed down with daily difficulties, crippled with that penury that eats into a man's nature till his very affections grow sordid, and his very dreams are tormented with his duns! Think of the poor fellows with ailing wives and sickly children, toiling daily, not to give them luxuries—not to supply them with what may alleviate weariness or distract suffering, but bare sustenance—coarse diet and coarser dress! Ah, my dear Martin, that Romanist plan of fasting one day in the week wouldn't be a bad institution were we to introduce it into our social code. If you and I could have, every now and then, our feelings of privation, just to teach us what others experience all the week through, we'd have, if not more sympathy with narrow fortune, at least more thankfulness for its opposite."

"Her ladyship begs you will read this note, sir," said a servant, presenting an open letter to Martin. He took it, and having perused it, handed it to Repton, who slowly read the following lines:—

"'The Lodge, Tuesday.

"'MADAM,—I have his Excellency's commands to inquire on what day it will suit Mr. Martin and your ladyship to favour him with your company at dinner? His Excellency would himself say Saturday, but any intermediate day more convenient to yourself will be equally agreeable to him.

"'I have the honour to remain, madam,
"'With every consideration, yours,
"'LAWRENCE BELCOUR, A.D.C.'

"'With every consideration!'" repeated Repton. "Confound the puppy, and his Frenchified phraseology. Why is he not, as he ought to be, your obedient servant?"

"It is a somewhat cold and formal invitation," said Martin, slowly. "I'll just see what she thinks of it;" and he arose and left the room. His absence was fully of twenty minutes' duration, and when he did return his face betokened agitation.

"Here's more of it, Repton," said he, filling and drinking off his glass. "It's all *my* fault, it seems. I ought to have gone out to the 'Lodge' this morning, or called on somebody, or done something; in fact, I have been remiss, neglectful, deficient in proper respect——"

"So that you decline the invitation?" broke in Repton.

"Not a bit of it; we're to accept it, man. That's what I cannot comprehend. We are offended, almost outraged, but still we're to submit. Ah, Repton, I'll be really rejoiced when we leave this—get away from all these petty annoyances and small intriguings, and live amongst strangers!"

"Most patriotically spoken; but I'm not surprised at what you say. Have you made any resolve as to whither you mean to go?"

"No; we have so many plans, that the chances are we take none of them. I'm told—I know nothing of it myself—but I'm told that we shall easily find—and in any part of the Continent—the few requirements we want; which are, an admirable climate, great cheapness, and excellent society."

There was a slight twinkle in Martin's eye as he spoke, as if he were in reality relishing the absurdity of these expectations.

"Was it Kate Henderson who encouraged you to credit this flattering picture?"

"No; these are my lady's own experiencies, derived from a residence there 'when George the Third was King.' As to

Kate, the girl is by no means deficient in common sense; she has the frivolity of a Frenchwoman, and that light, superficial tone foreign education imparts; but take my word for it, Repton, she has very fine faculties!"

"I will take your word for it, Martin. I think you do her no more than justice," said the old lawyer, sententiously.

"And I'll tell you another quality she possesses," said Martin, in a lower and more cautious tone, as though dreading to be overheard—"she understands my lady to perfection—when to yield, and when to oppose her. The girl has an instinct about it, and does it admirably; and there was poor dear Mary, with all her abilities, and she never could succeed in this! How strange, for nobody would think of comparing the two girls!"

"Nobody!" drily re-echoed Repton.

"I mean, of course, that nobody who knew the world could, for in all the glitter and show off of fashionable acquirement poor Molly is the inferior."

Repton looked steadfastly at him for several seconds; he seemed as if deliberating within himself whether or not he'd undeceive him at once, or suffer him to dwell on an illusion so pleasant to believe. The latter feeling prevailed, and he merely nodded slowly, and passed the decanter across the table.

"Molly," continued Martin, with all the fluency of a weak man when he fancies he has got the better of an argument—"Molly is her father all over. The same resolution—the same warmth of heart—and that readiness at an expedient which never failed poor Barry! What a clever fellow he was! If he *had* a fault, it was just being too clever."

"Too speculative—too sanguine," interposed Repton.

"That, if you like to call it so; the weakness of genius."

Repton gave a long sigh, and crossing his arms, fell into a fit of musing, and so they both sat for a considerable time.

"Harry is coming home, you said?" broke in Repton at last.

"Yes; he is tired of India—tired of soldiering, I believe. If he can't manage an exchange into some regiment at home, I think he'll sell out."

"By Jove!" said the old lawyer, speaking to himself, but still aloud, "the world has taken a strange turn of late. The men that used to have dash and energy have become loungers and idlers, and the energy—the real energy of the nation—has centered in the women—the women and the priests! If I'm not much mistaken, we shall see some rare specimens of enthusiasm ere long. Such elements as these will not slumber nor sleep!"

While Martin was pondering over this speech, a servant entered to say that Mr. Crow was without, and begged to know if he might pay his respects. "Ay, by all means. Tell him to come in," said Martin. And the words were scarcely uttered when the artist made his appearance, in full dinner costume, and with a certain unsteadiness in his gait, and a restless look in his eyes, that indicated his having indulged freely, without, however, having passed the barrier of sobriety.

"You heard of our arrival, then?" said Martin, after the other had paid his respects, and assumed a seat.

"Yes, sir. It was mentioned to-day at dinner, and so I resolved that, when I could manage to step away, I'd just drop in and ask how her ladyship and yourself were."

"Where did you dine, Crow?"

"At the Chief Secretary's, sir, in the Park," replied Crow, with a mixture of pride and bashfulness.

"Ah, indeed. Was your party a large one?"

"There were fourteen of us, sir, but I only knew three or four of the number."

"And who were they, Crow?" said Repton, whose curiosity on all such topics was extreme.

"Young Nelligan was one. Indeed, it was through him I was asked myself. Colonel Massingbred was good enough to come over and have a look at my Moses—a favour I humbly hope you'll do me, gentlemen, any spare morning, for it's a new conception altogether, and I make the light come out of the bulrushes, just as Caravaggio did with his Lazarus."

"Never mind Lazarus, Crow, but tell us of this dinner. Who were the others?"

"Well, sir, there was Nelligan and me—that's one; and Tom Magennis—two——"

"Our neighbour of Barnagheela?" exclaimed Martin, in amazement.

"The same, sir. I left him there at the port wine, and my word for it but they'll not get him away easily, though Father Rafferty will do his best——"

"And was the priest also of the party?"

"He was, sir; and sat at the colonel's left, and was treated with every honour and distinction."

"Eh, Martin, am I a true prophet?—answer me that. Has

Val Repton foretold the course of events we are entering upon, or has he not?"

"But this is a regular outrage—an open insult to us!" cried Martin. "Here is a leading member of the Government entertaining the very men who opposed and defeated us—actually caressing the very party which they enlisted us to crush!"

"This game is within every child's comprehension!" said Repton. "If *you*, and men of your stamp and fortune, could have secured them a parliamentary majority, they'd have preferred you. You'd be pleasanter to deal with, less exacting, more gentlemanly in fact; but, as you failed to do this—as it was plain and clear you had not the people with you—why, they've thrown you over without a scruple, and taken into their favour the men who can and will serve them. I don't mean to say that the bargain is a good one—nay, I believe the price of such aid will be very costly; but what do they care? It is one of the blessings of a representative government that Tories have to pay Whig debts, and Whigs are heirs to Tory defalcations."

"Were politics discussed at table?" asked Martin, half impatiently.

"All manner of subjects. We had law, and the assizes, and the grand jury lists, and who ought to be high sheriffs, and who not. And young Massingbred made a kind of a speech——"

"Was he there also?"

"That he was; and did the honours of the foot of the table, and made it the pleasantest place too! The way he introduced a toast to the independent and enlightened electors of Oughterard was as neat a thing as ever I heard."

"The devil take the whole batch of them!" cried Martin. "To think that I've spent nearly three thousand pounds for such a set of scoundrels is past endurance. I'll never set foot amongst them again; as long as I live I'll never enter that town."

"Father Neal's own words," cried Crow. "'We done with Martin for ever,' said he. 'This election was his Waterloo. He may abdicate now!'"

"And that sentiment was listened to by the Chief Secretary?" exclaimed Martin.

"If he wasn't deaf he couldn't help hearing it, for we all did; and when I ventured to observe that a country was never the better for losing the patrons of art, and the great families that could encourage a genius, young Massingbred said, 'Give up Moses, Mr. Crow—give up Moses, and paint Daniel O'Connell, and you'll never want admirers and supporters!' And they drowned me in a roar of laughter."

"I wish my lady could only hear all this," said Repton, in a whisper to Martin.

"Always provided that I were somewhere else!" answered Martin. "But to be serious, Repton, I'll hold no intercourse with men who treat us in this fashion. It is absurd to suppose that the Secretary could receive at his table this rabble—this herd of low, vulgar——"

"Eh—what!" broke in Crow, with an expression of such truly comic misery as made Repton shake with laughter.

"I didn't mean *you*, Crow—I never thought of including you in such company—but if these be Colonel Massingbred's guests, I'll swear that Godfrey Martin shall not be my Lord Reckington's!" And with this bold resolve, uttered in a voice and manner of very unusual firmness, Martin arose and left the room.

"On the whole, then, your party was a pleasant one?" said Repton, anxious to lead Crow into some further details of the late dinner.

"Well, indeed it was, and it was not," said the artist, hesitatingly. "It was like a picture with some fine bits in it—a dash of rich colour here and there—but no keeping!—no general effect! You understand? I myself took no share in the talk. I never understood it; but I could see that they who did were somehow at cross-purposes—all standing in adverse lights—if I may use the expression. Whenever the colonel himself, or one of the 'swells' of the company, came out with a fine sentiment about regenerated Ireland, happy and prosperous, and so forth, Magennis was sure to break in with some violent denunciation of the infernal miscreants, as he called the landlords, or the greatest curse of the land—the Law Church!"

"And how did Father Neal behave?"

"With great decorum—the very greatest. He moderated all Tom's violence, and repeatedly said that he accepted no participation in such illiberal opinions. 'We have grievances, it is true,' said he, 'but we live under a Government able and willing to redress them. It shall never be said of us that we were either impatient or intolerant.' 'With such support, no Government was ever weak!' said the colonel, and they took wine together."

"That was very pleasant to see!" said Repton.

"So it was, sir," rejoined Crow, innocently; "and I thought to myself, if there was only an end of all their squabbling and fighting, they'd have time to cultivate the arts and cherish men of genius—if they had them!" added he, after a pause.

"Father Neal, then, made a favourable impression, you'd say?" asked Repton, half carelessly.

"I'd say, very favourable—very favourable indeed. I remarked that he always spoke so freely, so liberally. Twice or thrice, too, he said, 'If the Papists do this, that, or t'other;' and when the colonel asked whether the Catholics of Ireland submitted implicitly to Rome in all things, he laughed heartily, and said, 'About as much as we do to the Cham of Tartary!'

"'I'd like to examine our friend there before the Committee,' whispered an old gentleman at the colonel's right hand.

"'It was the very thing was passing through my own mind at the minute,' said the colonel.

"'That's exactly the kind of thing we want,' said the old gentleman again—'a bold, straightforward denial—something that would tell admirably with the House!'

"'Present me to your friend Massingbred!' And then the Chief Secretary said, 'The Member for Strudeham—Mr. Crutchley—is very desirous of being known to you, Mr. Rafferty.' And there was great smiling, and bowing, and drinking wine together after that."

Martin now re-entered the room, and taking his place at the table, sat for some minutes in moody silence.

"Well," said Repton, "what does my lady think of your tidings?"

"She says she doesn't believe it!"

"Doesn't believe that these people dined with Massingbred—that Crow saw them—heard them—dined with them?"

"No, no—not that," said Martin, gently, and laying his hand familiarly on Crow's arm. "Don't mistake me, nor don't let Repton play the lawyer with us and pervert the evidence. Lady Dorothea can't believe that her distinguished relative, the Viceroy, would ever countenance this game; that—that—in fact, we're to dine there, Repton, and see for ourselves! Though," added he, after a brief pause, "what we are to see, or what we are to do when we've seen it, I wish anybody would tell me!"

"Then I'll be that man!" said Repton, with a mock solemnity, and imitating the tone and manner of a judge delivering sentence. "You'll go from this place to the Lodge, where you'll be fed 'to the neck,' feasted and flattered, and all your good resolves and high purposes will be cut down, and your noble indignation buried within the precincts of your own hearts!"

And, so saying, he arose from the table and extended his hand to take leave, with all the gravity of a solemn farewell.

"If you could say a word to his excellency about Moses," muttered Crow, as he was leaving the room, "it would be the making of me!" But Martin never heeded the appeal—perhaps he never heard it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DARKENING FORTUNES.

The Martins had always lived a life of haughty estrangement from their neighbours; there were none of exactly their own rank and pretensions within miles of them, and they were too proud to acknowledge the acquaintance of a small squirearchy, which was all that the country around could boast. Notwithstanding all the isolation of the their existence, their departure created a great void in the county, and their absence was sensibly felt by every class around. The very requirements of a large fortune suggest a species of life and vitality—the movement of servants—the passing and repassing of carriages—the necessary intercourse with market and post—all impart a degree of bustle and movement, terribly contrasted by the unbroken stillness of a deserted mansion.

Lady Dorothea had determined that there should be no ambiguity as to the cause of their departure; she had given the most positive orders on this head to every department of the household. To teach an ungrateful people the sore consequences of their own ingratitude, the lesson should be read in everything: in the little villages thrown out of work—in the silent quarries—the closed school-houses—the model farm converted into grass-land—even to the grand entrance, now built up by a wall of coarse masonry—the haughty displeasure of the proud mistress revealed itself, all proclaiming the sentiment of a deep, unforgiving vengeance. She had tortured her ingenuity for details which should indicate her anger; nor was she satisfied if her displeasure should not find its way into every cabin and at every hearth. The small hamlet of Cro' Martin had possessed a dispensary; a hard-working, patient, and skilful man had passed many years of life there as the doctor, eking out the poor subsistence of that unfavoured lot, and supporting a family by a life of dreary toil. From this her ladyship's subscription—the half of all his salary—was now to be withdrawn. She thought "Cloves was grown negligent; it might be age—if so, a younger man would be better; besides, if he could afford to dress his three daughters in the manner he did, he surely could not require her thirty pounds per annum." The servants, too, complained that he constantly mistook their complaints. In fact, judgment was recorded against Cloves, and there was none to recommend him to mercy!

We have said that there was a little chapel within the bounds of the demesne; it occupied a corner of a ruin which once had formed Cro' Martin Abbey, and now served for the village church. It was very small, but still large enough for its little congregation. The vicar of this humble benefice was a very old man, a widower, and childless, though once the father of a numerous family. Doctor Leslie had, some eighteen years back been unfortunate enough to incur her ladyship's displeasure, and was consequently never invited to the Castle, nor recognised in any way, save by the haughty salute that met him as he left the church. To save him, however, a long and tedious walk on Sundays, he was permitted to make use of a little private path to the church, which led through one of the shrubberies adjoining his own house—a concession of the more consequence as he was too poor to keep a carriage of the humblest kind. This was now ordered to be closed up, the gate removed, and a wall to replace it. "The poor had got the habit of coming that way; it was never intended for their use, but they had usurped it. To-morrow or next day we should hear of its being claimed at law as a public right of passage. It was better to do the thing in time. In short, it must be 'closed.'" By some such reasoning as this, Lady Dorothea persuaded herself to this course, and who should gainsay her? Oh, if men would employ but one-tenth of all that casuistry by which they minister to their selfishness, in acts of benevolence and good feeling—if they would only use a little sophistry, to induce them to do right—what a world this might be!"

Mary Martin knew nothing of these decisions; overwhelmed by the vast changes on every side, almost crushed beneath the difficulties that surrounded her, her first few weeks passed over like a disturbed dream. Groups of idle, unemployed people saluted her in mournful silence as she passed the roads. Interrupted works, half-executed plans met her eye at every turn, and at every moment the same words rang in her ears, "Her ladyship's orders," as the explanation of all.

Hitherto her life had been one of unceasing exertion and toil; from early dawn to late night she had been employed; her fatigues, however, great as they were, had been always allied with power. What she willed she could execute. Means never failed her, no matter how costly the experiment, to carry out her plans, and difficulty gave only zest to every undertaking. There is nothing more captivating than this sense of uncontrolled ability for action, especially when exercised by one of a warm and enthusiastic nature. To feel herself the life and spring of every enterprise, to know that she suggested and carried out each plan, that her ingenuity devised and her energy accomplished all the changes around her, was in itself a great fascination, and now suddenly she was to awake from all this, and find herself unoccupied and powerless. Willingly, without a regret, could she abdicate from all the pomp and splendour of a great household; she saw troops of servants depart, equipage sold, great apartments closed up without a pang! To come down to the small conditions of narrow fortune in her daily life cost her nothing, beyond a smile. It was odd, it was strange, but it was no more! Far, otherwise, however, did she feel the circumstances of her impaired power. That hundreds of workmen were no longer at her bidding, that whole families no longer looked up to her for aid and comfort, these were astounding facts, and came upon her with an actual shock.

"For what am I left here?" cried she, passionately, to Henderson, as he met each suggestion she made by the one cold word "impossible." "Is it to see destitution that I cannot relieve? Witness want that I am powerless to alleviate? To what end, or with what object, do I remain?"

"I canna say, miss," was the dry response.

"If it be to humiliate me by the spectacle of my own inefficiency, a day or a week will suffice for that—years could not teach me more."

Henderson bowed what possibly might mean an acquiescence.

"I don't speak of the estate," cried she, earnestly; "but what's to become of the people?"

"Many o' them will emigrate, miss, I've no doubt," said he, "when they see there's nothing to bide for."

"You take it easily, sir. You see little hardships in men having to leave home and country; but I tell you, that home may be poor, and country cruel, and yet both very hard to part with"

"That's vara true, miss," was the dry response.

"For anything there is now to be done here, you, sir, are to the full as competent as I am. I ask again—To what end am I here?"

Giving to her question a very different significance from what she intended, Henderson calmly said, "I thought, miss, it was just yer ain wish, and for no other reason."

Mary's cheek became crimson, and her eyes flashed with angry indignation; but, repressing the passion that was bursting within her, she walked hastily up and down the room in silence. At length, opening a large coloured map of the estate which lay on the table, she stood attentively considering it for some time. "The works at Carrigalone are stopped?" said she, hastily.

"Yes, miss."

"And the planting at Kyle's Wood?"

"Yes, miss."

"And even the thinning there—is that stopped?"

"Yes, miss; the bark is to be sold, and a' the produce of the wood for ten years, to a contractor, a certain Mister——"

"I don't want his name, sir. What of the marble quarries?"

"My lady thinks they're nae worth a' they cost, and won't hear o' their being worked again."

"And is the harbour at Kilkieran to be given up?"

"Yes, miss, and the Osprey's Nest will be let. I think they'll mak' an inn or a public o' it."

"And if the harbour is abandoned, what is to become of the fishermen? The old quay is useless."

"Vara true, miss; but there's a company goin' to take the Royalties o' the coast the whole way to Belmullet."

"A Scotch company, Mr. Henderson?" said Mary, with a sly malice in her look.

"Yes, miss," said he, colouring slightly. "The house of M'Grotty and Co. is at the head o' it."

"And are they the same enterprising people who have proposed to take the demesne on lease, provided the gardens be measured in as arable land?"

"They are, miss; they've signed the rough draft o' the lease this morning."

"Indeed!" cried she, growing suddenly pale as death. "Are there any other changes you can mention to me, since in the few days I have been ill so much has occurred?"

"There's nae muckle more to speak o', miss. James M'Grotty—he's the younger brother—was here yesterday, to try and see you about the school. He wants the house for his steward, but if you object, he'll just take the doctor's."

"Why—where is Doctor Cloves to go?"

"He does na ken exactly, Miss. He thinks he'll try Auckland, or some of these new places in New Zealand."

"But the dispensary must be continued—the people cannot be left without medical advice."

"Mr. James says he he'll think aboot it when he comes over in summer. "He's a vara spirited young man, and when there's a meetin' house built in the village——"

"Enough of this, Henderson. Come over here to-morrow, for I'm not strong enough to hear more to-day, and let Mr. Scanlan know that I wish to see him this evening."

And Mary motioned with her hand that he should withdraw. Scarcely was the door closed behind him than she burst into a torrent of tears; her long pent up agony utterly overpowered her, and she cried with all the vehemence of a child's grief. Her heart once opened to sorrow, by a hundred channels came tributaries to her affliction. Up to that moment her uncle's departure had never seemed a cruelty; now, it took all the form of desertion; the bitterness of her forlorn condition had never struck her till it came associated with all the sorrows of others. It is not impossible that wounded self-love entered into her feelings. It is by no means unlikely that the sense of her own impared importance added poignancy to her misery. Who shall anatomise motives, or who shall be skilful enough to trace the springs of one human emotion? There was assuredly enough outside of and above all personal consideration to ennoble her grief and dignify her affliction.

Her first impulses led her to regard herself as utterly useless, her occupation gone, and her whole career of duty annihilated. A second and a better resolve whispered to her that she was more than ever needful to those who without her would be left without a friend. "If I desert them, who is to remain?" asked she. "It is true, I am no more able to set in motion the schemes by which their indigence was alleviated. I am powerless, but not all worthless. I can still be their nurse—their comforter—their schoolmistress. My very example may teach them how altered fortune can be borne with fortitude and patience. They shall see me reduced to a thousand privations, and perhaps even this may bear its lesson." Drying her tears, she began to feel within her some of the courage she hoped to inspire in others, and anxious not to let old Catty detect the trace of sorrow in her features, issued forth into the wood for a walk.

As the deep shadows thickened around her, she grew calmer and more meditative; the solemn stillness of the place, the deep, unbroken quietude, imparted its own soothing influence to her thoughts, and as she went her heart beat freer, and her elastic temperament again arose to cheer and sustain her. To confront the future boldly and well, it was necessary that she should utterly forget the past. She could no longer play the great part to which wealth and high station had raised her; she must now descend to that humbler one—all whose influence should be derived from acts of kindness and words of comfort, unaided by the greater benefits she had once dispensed.

The means placed at her disposal for her own expenditure had been exceedingly limited. It was her own desire they should be so, and Lady Dorothea had made no opposition to her wishes. Beyond this she had nothing, save a sum of five thousand pounds, payable at her uncle's death. By strictest economy—privation, indeed—she thought that she could save about a hundred pounds a year of this small income; but to do so would require the sale of both her horses, retaining only the pony and the little carriage, while her dress should be of the very simplest and plainest. In what way she should best employ this sum was to be for after consideration. The first thought was how to effect the saving without giving to the act any unnecessary notoriety. She felt that her greatest difficulty would be old Catty Broon. The venerable housekeeper had all her life regarded her with an affection that was little short of worship. It was not alone the winning graces of Mary's manner, nor the attractive charms of her appearance, that had so captivated old Catty, but that the young girl, to her eyes, represented the great family whose name she bore, and represented them so worthily. The title of the Princess, by which the country people knew her, seemed her just and rightful designation. Mary realised to her the proud scion of a proud stock, who had ruled over a territory rather than a mere estate; how, then, could she bear to behold her in all the straits and difficulties of a reduced condition? There seemed but one way to effect this, which was to give her new mode of life the character of a caprice. "I must make old Catty believe it is one of my wild and wilful fancies—a sudden whim—out of which a little time will doubtless rally me. She is the last in the world to limit me in the indulgence of a momentary notion; she will, therefore, concede everything to my humour, patiently awaiting the time when it shall assume a course the very opposite."

Some one should, however, be entrusted with her secret—without some assistance it could not be carried into execution—and who should that be? Alas, her choice was a very narrow one. It lay between Scanlan and Henderson. The crafty attorney was not, indeed, much to Mary's liking; his flippant vulgarity and pretension were qualities she could ill brook, but she had known him do kind things; she had seen him on more than one occasion temper the sharpness of some of her ladyship's ukases, little suspecting, indeed, how far the possible impression upon herself was the motive that so guided him; she had, therefore, no difficulty in preferring him to the steward, whose very accent and manner were enough to render him hateful to her. Scanlan, besides, would necessarily have a great deal in his power; he would be able to make many a concession to the poor people on the estate, retard the cruel progress of the law, or give them time to provide against its demands. Mary felt that she was in a position to exercise a certain influence over him; and, conscious of the goodness of the cause she would promote, never hesitated as to the means of employing it.

Who shall say, too, that she had not noticed the deferential admiration by which he always distinguished her? for there is a species of coquetry that takes pleasure in a conquest where the profits of victory would be thoroughly despised. We are not bold enough to say that such feelings found their place in Mary's heart. We must leave its analysis to wiser and more cunning anatomists.

Straying onwards ever in deep thought, and not remarking whither, she was suddenly struck by the noise of masonry—strange sounds in a spot thus lonely and remote—and now walking quickly onward, she found herself on the path by which the vicar on Sundays approached the church, and here, at a little distance, descried workmen employed in walling up the little gateway of the passage.

"By whose orders is this done?" cried Mary, to whose quick intelligence the act revealed its whole meaning and motive.

"Mr. Henderson, miss," replied one of the men. "He said we were to work all night at it, if we couldn't be sure of getting it done before Sunday."

A burst of passionate indignation rose to her lips, but she turned away without a word, and re-entered the wood in silence.

"Yes," cried she, to herself, "it is, indeed, a new existence is opening before me; let me strive so to control my temper, that I may view it calmly and dispassionately, so that others may not suffer from the changes in *my* fortune."

She no sooner reached the house than she despatched a note to Mr. Scanlan, requesting to see him as early as possible on the following morning. This done, she set herself to devise her plans for the future—speculations it must be owned, to which her own hopeful temperament gave a colouring that a colder spirit and more calculating mind had never bestowed on them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW MR. SCANLAN GIVES SCOPE TO A GENEROUS IMPULSE.

It is a remark of Wieland's, that although the life of man is measured by the term of fourscore years and ten, yet that his ideal existence, or, as he calls it, his "unacted life," meaning thereby his period of dreamy, projective, and forecasting existence, would occupy a far wider space. And he goes on to say that it is in this same imaginative longevity men differ the most from each other, the Poet standing to the ungifted Peasant in the ratio of centuries to years.

Mr. Maurice Scanlan would not appear a favourable subject by which to test this theory. If not endowed with any of the higher and greater qualities of intellect, he was equally removed from any deficiency on that score. The world called him "a clever fellow," and the world is rarely in fault in such judgments. Where there is a question of the creative faculties, where it is the divine essence itself is the matter of decision, the world will occasionally be betrayed into mistakes, as fashion and a passing enthusiasm may mislead it; but, where it is the practical and the real, the exercise of gifts by which men make themselves rich and powerful, then the world makes no blunders. She knows them as a mother knows her children. They are indeed the "World's own."

We have come to these speculations by contemplating Mr. Scanlan as he sat with Mary Martin's open letter before him. The note was couched in polite terms, requesting Mr. Scanlan to favour the writer with a visit at his earliest convenience—if possible early on the following morning. Had it been a document of suspected authenticity—a forged acceptance—an interpolated article in a deed—a newly-discovered codicil to a will—he could not have canvassed every syllable, scrutinised every letter with more searching zeal. It was hurriedly written: there was, therefore, some emergency. It began, "Dear sir," a style she had never employed before. The letter "D" was blotted, and seemed to have been originally destined for an "M," as though she had commenced Miss Martin requests, &c., and then suddenly adopted the more familiar address. The tone of command by which he was habitually summoned to Cro' Martin was assuredly not there, and Maurice was not the man to undervalue the smallest particle of evidence.

"She has need of me," cried he, to himself; "she sees everything in a state of subversion and chaos around her, and looks to me as the man to restore order. The people are entreating her to stay law proceedings—to give them time—to employ them—the poorest are all importuning her with stories of their sufferings. She is powerless, and, what's worse, she does not know what it is to be powerless to help them. She'll struggle, and fret, and scheme, and plan fifty things, and when she has failed in them all, fall back upon Maurice Scanlan for advice and counsel."

It was a grave question with Scanlan how far he would suffer her persecutions to proceed before he would come to her aid. "If I bring my succour too early, she may never believe the emergency was critical; if I delay it too long, she may abandon the field in despair, and set off to join her uncle." These were the two propositions which he placed before himself for consideration. It was a case for very delicate management, great skill, and great patience, but it was well worth all the cost. "If I succeed," said he, to himself, "I'm a made man. Mary Martin Mrs. Scanlan, I'm the agent for the whole estate, with Cro' Martin to live in, and all the property at my discretion. If I fail—that is, if I fail without blundering—I'm just where I was. Well," thought he, as he drove into the demesne, "I never thought I'd have such a chance as this. All gone, and she alone here by herself: none to advise, not one even to keep her company! I'd have given a thousand pounds down just for this opportunity, without counting all the advantages I have in my power from my present position, for I can do what I like with the estate—give leases or break them. It will be four months at least before old Repton comes down here, and in that time I'll have finished whatever I want to do. And now to begin the game." And with this he turned into the stable-yard, and descended from his gig. Many men would have been struck by the changed aspect of the place—silence and desolation where before there were movement and bustle; but Scanlan only read in the altered appearances around, the encouragement of his own ambitious hopes. The easy swagger in which the attorney indulged while moving about the stable-yard declined into a more becoming gait as he traversed the long corridors, and finally became actually respectful as he drew nigh the library, where he was informed Miss Martin awaited him, so powerful was the influence of old habit over the more vulgar instincts of his nature. He had intended to be very familiar and at his ease, and ere he turned the handle of the door his courage failed him.

"This is very kind of you, Mr. Scanlan," said she, advancing a few steps towards him as he entered. "You must have started early from home."

"At five, miss," said he, bowing deferentially.

"And of course you have not breakfasted?"

"Indeed, then, I only took a cup of coffee. I was anxious to be early. I thought from your note that there might be something urgent."

Mary half smiled at the mingled air of bashfulness and gallantry in which he uttered these broken sentences; for without knowing it himself, while he began in some confusion, he attained a kind of confidence as he went on.

"Nor have I breakfasted either," said she; "and I beg, therefore, you will join me."

Scanlan's face actually glowed with pleasure.

"I have many things *to* consult you upon with regard to the estate, and I am fully aware that there is nobody more competent to advise me."

"Nor more ready and willing, miss," said Maurice, bowing.

"I'm perfectly certain of that, Mr. Scanlan. The confidence my uncle has always reposed in you assures me on that head."

"Wasn't I right about the borough, Miss Mary?" broke he in. "I told you how it would be, and that if you didn't make some sort of a compromise with the Liberal party——"

"Let me interrupt you, Mr. Scanlan, and once for all assure you that there is not one subject of all those which pertain to this county and its people which has so little interest for me as the local squabbles of party; and I'm sure no success on either side is worth the broken friendships and estranged affections it leaves behind it."

"A beautiful sentiment, to which I respond with all my heart," rejoined Scanlan, with an energy that made her blush deeply.

"I only meant to say, sir," added she, hastily, "that the borough and its politics need never be discussed between us."

"Just so, miss. We'll call on the next case," said Scanlan.

"My uncle's sudden departure, and a slight indisposition under which I have laboured for a week or so, have thrown me so far in arrear of all knowledge of what has been done here, that I must first of all ask you, not how the estate is to be managed in future, but does it any longer belong to us?"

"What, miss?" cried Scanlan, in amazement.

"I mean, sir, is it my uncle's determination to lease out everything—even to the demesne around the Castle; to sell the timber and dispose of the royalties? If so, a mere residence here could have no object for *me*. It seems strange, Mr. Scanlan, that I should have to ask such a question. I own to you—it is not without some sense of humiliation that I do so—I believed, I fancied I had understood my uncle's intentions. Some of them he had even committed to writing, at my request; you shall see them yourself. The excitement and confusion of his departure—the anxieties of leave-taking—one thing or another, in short, gave me little time to seek his counsel as to many points I wished to know; and, in fact, I found myself suddenly alone before I was quite prepared for it, and then I fell ill—a mere passing attack, but enough to unfit me for occupation."

"Breakfast is served, miss," said a maid-servant, at this conjuncture, opening a door into a small room, where the table was spread.

"I'm quite ready, and so I hope is Mr. Scanlan," said Mary, leading the way.

No sooner seated at table than she proceeded to do the honours with an ease that plainly told that all the subject of her late discourse was to be left for the present in abeyance. In fact, the very tone of her voice was changed, as she chatted away carelessly about the borough people and their doings, what strangers had lately passed through the town, and the prospects of the coming season at Kilkieran.

No theme could more readily have put Mr. Scanlan at his ease. He felt, or fancied he felt, himself at that degree of social elevation above the Oughterard people, which enabled him to talk with a species of compassionate jocularity of their little dinners and evening parties. He criticised toilet, and manners, and cookery, therefore, with much self-complacency—far more than had he suspected that Mary Martin's amusement was more derived from the pretension of the speaker than the matter which he discussed.

"That's what I think you'll find hardest of all, Miss Martin," said he, at the close of a florid description of the borough customs. "You can have no society here."

"And yet I mean to try," said she, smiling; "at least, I have gone so far as to ask Mrs. Nelligan to come and dine with me on Monday or Tuesday next."

"Mrs. Nelligan dine at Cro' Martin!" exclaimed he.

"If she will be good enough to come so far for so little!"

"She'd go fifty miles on the same errand; and if I know old Dan himself, he'll be a prouder man that day than when his son gained the gold medal."

"Then I'm sure *I*, at least, am perfectly requited," said Mary.

"But are you certain, miss, that such people will suit you?" said Scanlan, half timidly. "They live in a very different style, and have other ways than yours. I say nothing against Mrs. Nelligan; indeed, she comes of a very respectable family; but sure she hasn't a thought nor an idea in common with Miss Martin."

"'I suspect you are wrong there, Mr. Scanlan. My impression is, that Mrs. Nelligan and I will find many topics to agree upon, and that we shall understand each other perfectly; and if, as you suppose, there may be certain things new and strange to me in *her* modes of thinking, I'm equally sure she'll have to conquer many prejudices with regard to *me*."

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, miss!" was the sententious reply of Scanlan.

"Then there's our vicar!" broke in Mary. "Mr. Leslie will, I hope, take pity on my solitude."

"Indeed, I forgot him entirely. I don't think I ever saw him at Cro' Martin."

"Nor I either," said Mary; "but he may concede from a sense of kindness what he would decline to a mere point of etiquette. In a word, Mr. Scanlan," said she, after a pause, "all the troubles and misfortunes which we have lately gone through—even to the destitution of the old house here—have in a great measure had their origin in the studious ignorance in which we have lived of our neighbours. I don't wish to enter upon political topics, but I am sure, that had we known the borough people, and they us—had we been in the habit of mingling and associating together, however little—had we interchanged the little civilities, that are the charities of social life, we'd have paused, either of us, ere we gave pain to the other; we'd at least have made concessions on each side, and so softened down the asperities of party. More than half the enmities of the world are mere misconceptions."

"That's true!" said Scanlan, gravely. But his thoughts had gone on a very different errand from the theme in question, and were busily inquiring what effect all these changes might have upon his own prospects.

"And now for a matter of business," said Mary, rising and taking her place at another table. "I shall want your assistance, Mr. Scanlan. There is a small sum settled upon me, but not payable during my uncle's life. I wish to raise a certain amount of this, by way of loan—say a thousand pounds. Will this be easily accomplished?"

"What's the amount of the settlement, miss?" said Scanlan, with more eagerness than was quite disinterested.

"Five thousand pounds. There is the deed." And she pushed a parchment towards him.

Scanlan ran his practised eye rapidly over the document, and with the quick craft of his calling saw it was all correct. "One or even two thousand can be had upon this at once, miss. It's charged upon Kelly's farm and the mills——"

"All I want to know is, that I can have this sum at my disposal, and very soon; at once, indeed."

"Will next week suit you?"

"Perfectly. And now to another point. These are the few memoranda my uncle left with me as to his wishes respecting the management of the estate. You will see that, although he desires a considerable diminution of the sum to be spent in wages, and a strict economy in all outlay, that he still never contemplated throwing the people out of employment. The quarries were to be worked as before—the planting was to be continued—the gardens and ornamental grounds, indeed, were to be conducted with less expense; but the harbour at Kilkieran and the new school-house at Ternagh were to be completed; and, if money could be spared for it, he gave me leave to build a little hospital at the cross-roads, allowing forty pounds additional salary to Doctor Cloves for his attendance. These are the chief points; but you shall have the papers to read over at your leisure. We talked over many other matters; indeed, we chatted away till long after two o'clock the last night he was here, and I thought I understood perfectly all he wished. Almost his last words to me at parting were, 'As little change as possible, Molly. Let the poor people believe that I am still, where my heart is, under the roof of Cro' Martin!' "

The recollection of the moment brought the tears to her eyes, and she turned away her head in silence.

"Now," said she, rallying, and speaking with renewed energy, "if what Henderson says be correct, something later must have been issued than all this; some directions which I have never seen—not so much as heard of. He tells me of works to be stopped, people discharged, school-houses closed, tenants ejected; in fact, a whole catalogue of such changes as I never could have courage to see, much less carry through. I know my dear uncle well; he never would have imposed such a task upon me, nor have I the resources within me for such an undertaking."

"And have you received no letter from Mr. Martin, from Dublin?" asked Scanlan.

"None—not a line; a note from my aunt—indeed, not from my aunt, but by her orders, written by Kate Henderson—has reached me, in which, however, there is no allusion to the property, or the place."

"And yet her ladyship said that Mr. Martin would write to you himself, in the course of the week, fully and explicitly."

"To whom was this said, sir?"

"To myself, miss; there is the letter." And Scanlan drew from his pocket-book a very voluminous epistle, in Kate Henderson's hand. "This contains the whole of her ladyship's instructions. How all the works are to be stopped—roads, woods, and quarries; the townlands of Carrigalone and Killybogue to be distrained; Kyle-a-Noe the same. If a tenant can be got for the demesne, it is to be let, with the shooting over the seven mountains, and the coast-fishing too. There's to be no more charges for schools, hospital, or dispensary after next November; everything is to be on the new plan, what they call 'Self-supporting.' I'd like to know what that means. In fact, miss, by the time one half the orders given in that same letter is carried out, there won't be such another scene of misery and confusion in all Ireland as the estate of Cro' Martin."

"And this is sanctioned by my uncle?"

"I suppose we must conclude it is, for he says nothing to the contrary; and Mr. Repton writes me what he calls 'my instructions,' in a way that shows his own feeling of indignation about the whole business."

Mary was silent; there was not a sentiment which could give pain that had not then its place in her heart. Commiseration, deep pity for the sorrows she was to witness unavailingly, wounded pride, insulted self-esteem—all were there! And she turned away to hide the emotions which overcame her. For a moment the sense of self had the mastery, and she thought but of how she was to endure all this humiliation. "Am I," said she to her own heart—"am I to be insulted by the rivalry of Scotch stewards and gardeners, to be thrust from my place of power by some low-born creature, not even of the soil, but an alien?—to live here bereft of influence, representing nothing save the decay of our fortunes?" The torrent of her passion ran full and deep, and her bosom heaved in the agony of the moment. And then as suddenly came the reaction. "How small a share is mine in all this suffering—and how miserably selfish are even my sorrows. It is of others I should think!—of those who must leave hearth and home to seek out a new resting-place—of the poor, who are to be friendless—of the suffering, to whom no comfort is to come—of the old, who are to die in distant lands—and the young, whose hearts are never to warm to the affections of a native country!"

While affecting to arrange the papers in his pocket-book, Scanlan watched every passing shade of emotion in her face. Nor was it a study in which he was ignorant; the habits of his calling had made him a very subtle observer. Many a time had he framed his question to a witness by some passing expression of the features. More than once had he penetrated the heart through the eye! The elevation of sentiment had given its own character to her handsome face; and as she stood proudly erect, with arms folded on her breast, there was in her look and attitude all the calm dignity of an antique statue.

Scanlan interpreted truthfully what passed within her; and rightly judged that no small sentiment of condolence or sympathy would be appropriate to the occasion. Nor was he altogether unprovided for the emergency. He had seen a king's counsel warm up a jury to the boiling point, and heard him pour forth, with all the seeming vehemence of an honest conviction, the wildest rhapsodies about desecrated hearths and blackened roof-trees—talk of the spoiler and the seducer—and even shed a tear "over the widow and the orphan!"

"What say you to all this sir?" cried she. "Have you any counsel to give me—any advice?"

"It is just what I have not, miss," said he, despondingly, and, indeed, it was uppermost in my heart this morning when I was writing my letter, What's all I'm suffering compared to what Miss Martin must feel?"

"What letter do you allude to?" asked she, suddenly.

"A letter I wrote to Mr. Repton, miss," said he, with a deep sigh. "I told him plainly my mind about everything, and I said, 'If it's for exterminating you are—if you're going to turn out families that were on the land for centuries, and drive away over the seas—God knows where—the poor people that thought the name of Martin a shield against all the hardships of life, all I have to say is, you must look elsewhere for help, since it is not Maurice Scanlan will aid you.'"

"You said all this, sir?" broke she in, eagerly.

"I did, miss. I told him I'd hold the under-agency till he named some one to succeed me; but that I'd not put my hand to one act or deed to distress the tenants. It's giving up," said I, "the best part of my means of support—it's surrendering what I reckoned on to make me independent; but a good conscience is better than money, miss; and if I must seek out a new country, I'll go at least without the weight of a cruel wrong over me, and if I see one of our poor Western people beyond seas, I'll not be ashamed to meet him!"

"Oh, that was noble—that was truly noble conduct!" cried she, grasping his hand in both her own. How I thank you from my very heart for this magnanimity."

"If I ever suspected you'd have said the half of this, Miss Mary, the sacrifice would have been a cheap one indeed. But in truth I never meant to tell it. I intended to have kept my own secret; for I knew if any one only imagined why it was I threw up the agency, matters would only be worse on the estate."

"Yes, you are right," said she, thoughtfully. "This was most considerate. Such a censure would augment every difficulty."

"I felt that, miss. What I said to myself was, 'My successor will neither know the place nor the people; he'll be cruel where he ought to have mercy, and spare those that he ought to keep to their duty.' It isn't in a day nor a week that a man learns the habits of a large tenantry, nor was it without labour and pains that I acquired my present influence amongst them."

"Quite true," said she; but more as though following out her own reflections than hearing his.

"They'll have *you*, however," said Scanlan. "*You*, that are better to them than all the agents that ever breathed; and the very sight of you riding down amongst them will cheer their hearts in the darkest moments of life. I turned back the whole townland of Terry Valley. They were packing up to be off to America; but I told them, 'She's not going—she'll stay here, and never desert you.'"

"Nor will *you* either, sir," cried Mary. "You will not desert them, nor desert *me*. Recall your letter!"

"It's not gone off to the post yet. I was waiting to see you——"

"Better still. Oh! Mr. Scanlan, bethink you how much yet may be done for these poor people, if we will but forget ourselves and what we think we owe to self-esteem. If *you* will have sacrifices to make, believe me *I* shall not escape them also. It is nobler, too, and finer to remain here bereft of influence, stripped of all power, to share their sufferings and take part in their afflictions. Neither you nor I shall be to them what we have been; but still, let us not abandon them. Tell me this—say that you will stay to counsel and advise me—to guide me where I need guidance, and give me all the benefit of your experience and your knowledge. Let it be a compact between us then—neither shall go while the other remains!"

It was with difficulty Scanlan could restrain his delight at these words. How flattering to his present vanity—how suggestive were they of the future! With all the solemnity of a vow he bound himself to stay; and Mary thanked him with the fervour of true gratitude.

If there be few emotions so pleasurable as to be the object of acknowledged gratitude for real services, it may well be doubted whether the consciousness of not having merited this reward does not seriously detract from this enjoyment. There are men, however, so constituted, that a successful scheme—no matter how unscrupulously achieved—is always a triumph, and who cherish their self-love even in degradation! Maurice Scanlan is before our reader, and whether he was one of this number it is not for us to say; enough if we record that when he cantered homeward on that day he sang many a snatch of a stray ballad, and none of them were sad ones.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SUNDAY MORNING AT CRO' MARTIN.

NOTHING is further from our intention than to enter upon the long-vexed question as to the benefits of an Established Church for Ireland. Wiser heads than ours have discussed it polemically, politically, socially, and arithmetically; and there it is still, left to the judgment of each, as his religion, his party, or his prejudices sway him. There is one view of the subject, however, which no traveller in the country has ever failed to be struck by, which is, that these settlements of Protestantism, dotted through the land, are so many types of an advanced civilization, suggesting, even to those of a different faith, respect and veneration for the decorous observance of this Church, and the calm peacefulness with which they keep the Sabbath.

Priests may denounce and politicians declaim, but the Irish peasant, nurtured with all the prejudices of race and religion, never throws off his veneration for the little flock, who, like a brave garrison in a besieged land, hold manfully together round the banner of their Faith! How striking is this in remote parts of the country, where the reformed religion has made little progress, and its followers are few in number.

It was Sunday: the gates of Cro' Martin Park were open to admit all who might repair to the church. When the Martins were at home Lady Dorothea used to give to these occasions somewhat of the state of a procession. The servants wore their dress liveries; two carriages were in waiting. She herself appeared in a toilet that might have graced a Court chapel; and a formal ceremoniousness of speech and demeanour were ordained as the becoming recognition of the holy day. Trained to these observances by many a year, Mary could scarcely comprehend the strange sensation she felt as she walked along to church, unattended and alone. It was a bright day of early summer, with a soft wind stirring the leaves above, and rippling pleasantly the waters of the lake; the perfume of the new hay floated through the thin air, with the odour of the white thorn and the meadow-sweet; the birds were singing merrily; and through this gay carol came the mellow sound of the little bell that summoned to prayer. There was a delicious sense of repose in the stillness around, telling how, amid the cares and contentions of life, its wealth seekings, and its petty schemes there came moments when the better instincts were the victors, and men, in all the diversities of their rank and station, could meet together to kneel at one altar, and unite in one supplication. As she went, little glimpses were caught by her of the distant country beyond the demesne; and over all there reigned the same tranquility; the sound of voices, far away, adding to the effect, and making the silence more palpable. "How peaceful it is," thought she, "and how happy it might be! Could we but bridle our own passions, restrain our mean jealousies, and curb the evil promptings of our own hearts, what blessings might grow up amongst us! But for objects not worth the attaining—ambitions of no value when won—and my uncle might still be here, strolling along, perhaps, with me at this very moment, and with me drinking in this calm repose and soothing quietness."

Before her, at some little distance on the path, went the three daughters of the village doctor; and, though well and becomingly attired, there was nothing in their appearance to warrant the reproach Lady Dorothea had cast upon their style of dress. It was, indeed, scrupulously neat, but simple. The eldest was a girl of about sixteen, with all the gravity of manner and staid expression that belongs to those who stand in the light of mothers to younger sisters. The housekeeper of her father's little home, the manager of all within its humble household, his secretary, his companion, Ellen Cloves had acquired, while little more than a child, the patient and submissive temper that long worldly trial confers. They lived perfectly to themselves: between the society of the Castle and that of the farmers around there was no intermediate territory, and thus they passed their lives in a little circle of home duties and affections, which made up all their world.

Mary Martin had often wished it in her power to show them some attentions; she was attracted by their gentle faces and their calm and happy demeanour. Had her aunt permitted, she would have frequently invited them to the castle; lent them books and music, and sought companionship in their intercourse. But Lady Dorothea would not have heard of such a project; her theory was that familiarity with the peasant was so far safe that his station was a safeguard against any undue intimacy; while your half-gentry were truly perilous, for if you condescended to civility with them, they invariably mistook it for a friendship. Doctor Cloves dined every Christmas day at the great house; but so did Mr. Scanlan and all the other heads of departments. It was a very grand and solemn festival, where neither host nor guest was happy; each felt that it was but the acquaintance of an hour, and that with the moment of leave-taking came back all the cold reserve of the day before.

"Good morning, Miss Cloves; good day, Jane, and little Bessy," said Mary, as she overtook them.

"Good morning to you, Miss Martin," said Ellen, blushing with surprise at seeing her alone and on foot.

"I trust the doctor is not ill? I don't see him with you," said Mary, anxious to relieve her momentary embarrassment.

"Papa has been sent for to Knocktiernan, Miss Martin. They're afraid that a case of cholera has occurred there."

"May God forbid!" ejaculated Mary, with deep emotion; "we have great distress and poverty around us. I hope we may be spared this scourge."

"It is what papa feared always," rejoined Ellen, gravely, "that want and destitution would bring on the malady."

"Have you heard who it is is ill?"

"Simon Hanley, the carpenter, Miss Martin; he worked at the Castle once——"

"Yes, yes, I remember him; he made me my first little garden-rake. Poor fellow! And he has a large family. Your father will, I trust, have seen him in time. Knocktiernan is but four miles of a good road."

"Papa went by the Mills, Miss Martin, for shortness, for he was on foot."

"Why did he not ride?"

"He has sold Bluebell—the pony, I mean, Miss Martin."

"Mary's face became crimson with a blush that seemed to burn through the forehead into her very brain, and she could only mutter,—

"I'm sorry I didn't know; my carriage and pony were in the stable. If I had but heard of this——" and was silent.

They had now reached the entrance to the little churchyard, where the few members of the small flock lingered, awaiting the arrival of the clergyman. Amidst many a respectful salutation and gaze of affectionate interest, Mary walked to the end of the aisle, where, shrouded in heavy curtains, soft-cushioned and high-pannelled, stood the Castle pew.

It must be indeed hard for the rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The very appliances of his piety are the offshoots of his voluptuous habits; and that his heart should feel humble, his hassock must be of down! It was not often that the words of the pastor were heard within that solemn, small enclosure with the same reverend devotion. Mary was now alone there: her mind no longer distracted by the petty incidents of their coming, her proud station seemed to have vanished, and she felt herself but as one of an humble flock, supplicating and in sorrow!

Dr. Leslie had heard of the terrible visitation which menaced them, and made it the subject of his sermon. The fact of his own great age and fast declining strength gave a deeper meaning to all he said, and imparted to the faltering words of his benediction the solemnity of a farewell.

"You are a little fatigued to-day, doctor," said Mary, as he came out of church. "Will you allow me to offer you my arm?"

"Willingly, my dear Miss Mary. But this is not our road."

"Why so?—this is the path to the Vicarage."

"They've made some change, my dear; they've altered the approach."

"And you came round by the avenue—a distance of two miles?" cried she, deep crimson with shame.

"And kept you all waiting; but not very long, I trust," said he, smiling benevolently. "But come, talk to me of yourself, and when I am to come and see you."

"Oh, my dear Doctor Leslie, you must not think that I—that my uncle——" She stopped, and he pressed her hand gently, and said,—

"Do not speak of it—do not give importance to things which are trifles, if we have but good temper to leave them so. Is to-morrow a free day with you: or when shall I hope to find you at leisure?"

"My dear doctor, every day will be so in future—all my functions have ceased here. I am to be nothing in future."

"I had heard something of that, and I said to myself, 'Now will Mary Martin display her real character. No longer carried away by the mere enthusiasm of her great power and her high station—not exalted to herself by the flatteries around her—we shall see whether the sterling qualities of her nature will not supply higher and greater resourses than all the credit at a banker's!' I never undervalued all you did here, Mary Martin; I saw your noble purpose, even in failures; but I always felt, that to make these efforts react favourably on yourself, there should be something of sacrifice. To do good was a luxury to you; and it was a luxury very easy to purchase. You were rich—you were powerful—none controlled you; your benefits were acknowledged with all the enthusiasm of peasant gratitude. Why should you not be beneficent?—what other course of conduct could bring you one half the pleasure? For the future, it is from another source you must dispense wealth; but happily it is one which there is no exhausting—for the heart exercised to charity has boundless stores. Let these be your riches now. Go amongst the people; learn to know them—rather their friend than their benefactor—and, believe me, that all the gold you have scattered so generously, will not have sown such seeds of goodness as the meek example of your own noble submission to altered fortune. There, my dear," said he, smiling, "I'll say no more, lest you should tell me that I have preached half an hour already. And I may come to-morrow, you say?"

"What a happiness it will be for me to speak to you," said Mary, ardently. "There are so many things I want to say—so much on which I need advice."

"I'm but little practised in the ways of the world," said he, with a gentle sigh, "but I have ever found great wisdom in an honest purpose; and then," added he, more warmly, "it is a fine philosophy, that secures us against humiliation, even in defeat!"

They now walked along for some time without speaking, when a sudden angle of the path brought them directly in front of the Castle. They both halted suddenly, struck as it were by the aspect of the spacious and splendid structure, all silent and deserted. The doors were closed, the windows shuttered—not a living creature moved about the precincts—and the lone flagstaff on the tower unfurled no "banner to the breeze." Even the trimly-kept parterres were beginning to show signs of neglect, and tangled flowers fell across the gravel.

"What a lonely home for *her!*" muttered the old doctor, to himself; then suddenly exclaimed, "Here comes some one in search of you, Miss Martin."

And a servant approached and whispered a few words in her ear.

"Yes, immediately," said she, in reply.

She entreated the old man to rest himself for a while ere he continued his walk homeward; but he declined, and with an affectionate farewell they parted, he towards the Vicarage, and she to re-enter the Castle.

There is no need to practise mystery with our reader; and he who had just arrived, and was eager to see Miss Martin, was only Maurice Scanlan! As little use is there also in denying the fact that Mary was much annoyed at his inopportune coming. She was in no mood of mind to meet either him or such topics as he would certainly discuss. However, she had, so to say, given him a permission to be admitted at all times, and there was no help for it!

These same people that one "must see," are very terrible inflictions sometimes. They are ever present at the wrong time and the wrong place. They come in moments when their presence is a discord to all our thoughts; and what is to the full as bad, they don't know it—or they will not know it. They have an awful amount of self-esteem, and fancy that they never can be but welcome. A type of this class was Maurice Scanlan. Thrust forward by the accidents of life into situations for which nothing in his own humble beginnings seemed to adapt him, he had, like all the other Maurice Scanlans of the world, taken to suppose that he was really a very necessary and important ingredient in all affairs. He found, too, that his small cunning served to guide him, where really able men's wisdom failed them—for so it is, people won't take soundings when they think they can see the bottom—and finally, he conceived a very high opinion of his faculties, and thought them equal to much higher purposes than they had ever been engaged in.

Since his last interview with Mary Martin, he had never ceased to congratulate himself on the glorious turn of his affairs. Though not over-sanguine about others, Maurice was always hopeful of himself. It is one of the characteristics of such men, and one of the greatest aids to their activity, this ever-present belief in themselves. To secure the good opinion he had already excited in his favour, was now his great endeavour; and nothing could so effectually contribute to this, as to show an ardent zeal and devotion to her wishes. He had read somewhere of a certain envoy who had accomplished his mission ere it was believed he had set out—and he resolved to profit by the example. It was, then, in the full confidence of success, that he presented himself on this occasion.

Mary received him calmly—almost coldly: his presence was not in harmony with any thought that occupied her, and she deemed the task of admitting him something like an infliction.

"I drove over, Miss Mary," said he, rather disconcerted by her reserve—"I drove over, to-day, though I know you don't like business on a Sunday, just to say that I had completed that little matter you spoke of—the money affair. I didn't sleep on it, but went to work at once, and though the papers won't be ready for some days, the cash is ready for you, whenever you like to draw it."

"You have been very kind, and very prompt, sir," said she, thankfully, but with a languor that showed she was not thinking of the subject.

"He said five per cent.," continued Scanlan, "and I made no objection, for, to tell you the truth, I expected he'd have asked us six—he's generally a hard hand to deal with."

It was evident that he hoped her curiosity might have inquired the name of him thus alluded to; but she never did so, but heard the fact with a calm indifference.

Scanlan was uneasy—his heaviest artillery had opened no breach. What should be his next manœuvre?

"The money-market is tight just now," said he, speaking only to gain time for further observation, "and there's worse times, even, before us."

If Mary heard, she did not notice this gloomy speculation.

"I'm sure it will be no easy job to get the last November rent paid up. It was a bad crop; and now there's sickness coming amongst them," said he, half as though to himself.

"You'll have to excuse me to-day, Mr. Scanlan," said she, at last. "I find I can think of nothing—I am in one of my idle moods."

"To be sure, why not, Miss Mary?" said he, evidently piqued at the ill-success of all his zeal. "It was *I* made a mistake. I fancied, somehow, you were anxious about this little matter; but another day will do as well—whenever it's your own convenience."

"You are always considerate, always good-natured, Mr. Scanlan," said she, with a vagueness that showed she was scarcely conscious of what she uttered.

"If *you* think so, Miss Mary, I'm well repaid," said he, with a dash of gallantry in the tone; "nor is it by a trifle like this I'd like to show my—my—my devotion." And the last word came out with an effort that made his face crimson.

"Yes!" muttered she, not hearing one word of his speech.

"So that I'll come over to-morrow, Miss Mary," broke he in.

"Very well—to-morrow!" replied she, as still musing she turned to the window, no more thinking of the luckless attorney than if he had been miles away; and when at length she did look around, he was gone! It was some minutes ere Mary could perfectly reconcile herself to the fact that he had been there at all; but as to how, and when, and why he took his leave, were mysteries of which she could make nothing. And yet Mr. Scanlan had gone through a very ceremonious farewell: he had bowed, and sidled, and simpered, and smirked, and sighed—had thrown himself into attitudes pictorially devoted and despairing—looked unutterable things in various styles—and finally made an exit, covered with as much shame and discomfiture as so confident a spirit could well experience, muttering, as he paced the corridor, certain prospective reprisals for this haughty indifference, when a certain time should arrive, and a certain fair lady—— But we have no right to push his speculations further than he himself indulged them, and on the present occasion Maurice was less sanguine than his wont.

"I fed the mare, sir," said Barnes, as he held the stirrup for Scanlan to mount.

"And gave her water, too," said the attorney, doggedly.

"Devil a drop, then," resumed the other. "I just sprinkled the oats, no more; that's Miss Mary's orders always."

"She understands a stable well," said Scanlan, half questioning.

"Doesn't she?" said the other, with a sententious smack of the lip. "To bit a horse or to back him—to tache him his paces and cure him of bad tricks—to train him for harness, double and single—to show him the way over a wall, or a wide ditch—to make him rise light and come down easy, she hasn't a match on this island; and as for training," added he, with fresh breath, "did you see Sir Lucius?"

"No," said Scanlan, with awakened interest.

"Wait till I bring him out, then. I'll show you a picture!"

And Barnes disappeared into the stable. In five minutes after, he returned, leading a dark brown horse, who, even shrouded in all the covering of hood and body-clothes, displayed in his long step and lounging gait the attributes of a racer.

In a few minutes Barnes had unbuckled strap and surcingle, and sweeping back the blankets dexterously over the croup, so as not to ruffle a hair of the glossy coat, exhibited an animal of surpassing symmetry, in all the pride of high condition.

"There's a beast!" said he, proudly, "without speck or spot, brand or blemish about him! You're a good judge of a horse, Mr. Scanlan, and tell me when did you see his equal?"

"He's a nice horse!" said Scanlan, slowly, giving to each word a slow and solemn significance. Then, casting a keen glance all around and over him, added, "There's a splint on the off-leg!"

"So there is, the least taste in life," said Barnes, passing his hand lightly over it; "and was there ever a horse—worth the name of a horse—that hadn't a splint? Sure, they're foaled with them! I wanted Miss Mary to let me take that off with an ointment I have, but she wouldn't. 'It's not in the way of the tendon,' says she. 'It will never spoil his action, and we'll not blemish him with a mark.' Them's her very words."

"He's a nice horse," said Scanlan, once more, as if the very parsimony of the praise was the highest testimony of the utterer; "and in rare condition, too," added he.

"In the very highest," said Barnes. "He was as sure of that cup as I am that my name's Tim."

"What cup?" asked Scanlan.

"Kil-timmon—the June race—he's entered and all—and now he's to be sold—them's the orders I got yesterday—he's to be auctioned at Dycer's on Saturday for whatever he'll bring!"

"And now, what do you expect for him, Barnes?" said Maurice, confidentially.

"Sorrow one o' me knows. He might go for fifty—he might go for two hundred and fifty! and cheap he'd be of it. He has racing speed over a flat course, and steeple-chase action for his fences. With eleven stone on his back—one that can ride, I mean, of course—he'd challenge all Ireland."

"I wouldn't mind making a bid for him myself!" said Scanlan, hesitating between his jockeyism and the far deeper game which he was playing.

"Do then, sir, and don't draw him for the race, for he'll win it as sure as I'm here. 'Tis Jemmy was to ride him; and Miss

Mary wouldn't object to give you the boy, jacket and all, her own colours—blue, with white sleeves."

"Do you think so, Barnes? Do you think she'd let me run him in the Martin colours?" cried Scanlan, to whom the project now had suddenly assumed a most fascinating aspect.

"What would you give for him?" asked Barnes, in a business-like voice.

"A hundred—a hundred and fifty—two hundred, if I was sure of what you say."

"Leave it to me, sir—leave it all to *me*," said Barnes, with the gravity of a diplomatist who understood his mission. "Where can I see you to-morrow?"

"I'll be here about ten o'clock!"

"That will do—enough said!" And Barnes, replacing the horse-sheet, slowly re-entered the stable; while Scanlan, putting spurs to his nag, dashed hurriedly away, his thoughts outstripping in their speed the pace he went, and traversing space with a rapidity that neither "blood" nor training ever vied with!

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. HERMAN MERL.

This much-abused world of ours, railed at by divines, sneered down by cynics, slighted by philosophers, has still some marvellously pleasant things about it, amongst which, first and foremost, *facile princeps*, is Paris! In every other city of Europe there is a life to be learned and acquired just like a new language. You have to gain the acquaintance of certain people, obtain admission to certain houses, submit yourself to ways, habits, hours, all peculiar to the locality, and conform to usages in which—at first, at least—you rarely find anything beyond penalties on your time and your patience. But Paris demands no such sacrifices. To enjoy it, no apprenticeship is required. You become free of the Guild at the Porte St. Denis. By the time you reach the Boulevards you have ceased to be a stranger. You enter the "Frères" at dinner-hour like an old habitué. The atmosphere of light, elastic gaiety around you, the tone of charming politeness that meets your commonest inquiry, the courtesy bestowed upon your character as a foreigner, are all as exhilarating in their own way as your sparkling glass of Moët sipped in the window, from which you look down on plashing fountains, laughing children, and dark-eyed grisettes! The whole thing in its bustle and movement, its splendour, sunlight, gilded furniture, mirrors, and smart toilettes, is a piece of natural magic, with this difference—that its effect is ever new—ever surprising!

Sad and sorrowful faces are, of course, to be met with, since grief has its portion everywhere; but that air of languid indifference, that look of wearied endurance, which we characterise by the classic term of "boredom," is, indeed, a rare spectacle in this capital; and yet now at the window of a splendid apartment in the Place Vendôme, listlessly looking down into the square beneath, stood a young man, every line of whose features conveyed this same expression. He had, although not really above twenty-four or twenty-five, the appearance of one ten years older. On a face of singular regularity, and decidedly handsome, dissipation had left its indelible traces. The eyes were deep sunk, the cheeks colourless, and around the angles of the mouth were those tell-tale circles which betray the action of an oft-tried temper, and the spirit that has gone through many a hard conflict. In figure he was very tall, and seemed more so in the folds of a long dressing-gown of antique brocade, which reached to his feet; a small, dark-green skull-cap, with a heavy silver tassel, covered one side of his head, and in his hand he held a handsome meerschaum, which, half mechanically, he placed from time to time to his lips, although its bowl was empty.

At a breakfast-table, covered with all that could provoke appetite, sat a figure as much unlike him as could be. He was under the middle size, and slightly inclined to flesh, with a face which, but for some strange resemblance to what one has seen in pictures by the older artists, would have been unequivocally vulgar. The eyes were small, keen, and furtive; the nose, slightly concave in its outline, expanded beneath into nostrils wide and full; but the mouth, thick-lipped, sensual, and coarse, was more distinctive than all, and showed that Mr. Herman Merl was a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion—a fact well corroborated by the splendour of a very flashy silk waistcoat, and various studs, gold chain, rings, and trinkets profusely scattered over his costume. And yet there was little of what we commonly recognise as the Jew in the character of his face. The eyes were not dark, the nose not aquiline; the hair, indeed, had the wavy massiveness of the Hebrew race; but Mr. Merl was a "Red Jew," and the Red Jew, like the red partridge, is a species *per se.*

There was an ostentatious pretension in the "get up" of this gentleman. His moustache, his beard, his wrist-buttons, his shirt-studs, the camelia in his coat—all, even to the heels of his boots, had been made studies, either to correct a natural defect, or show off what he fancied a natural advantage. He seemed to have studied colour like a painter, for his dark brown frock was in true keeping with the tint of his skin; and yet, despite these painstaking efforts, the man was indelibly, hopelessly vulgar. Everything about him was imitation, but it was imitation that only displayed its own shortcomings.

"I wonder how you can resist these oysters, captain," said he, as he daintily adjusted one of these delicacies on his fork; "and the Chablis, I assure you, is excellent."

"I never eat breakfast," said the other, turning away from the window, and pacing the room with slow and measured tread.

"Why, you are forgetting all the speculations that used to amuse us on the voyage—the delicious little dinners we were to enjoy at the 'Rocher,' the tempting déjeûners at 'Véfour's.' By Jove! how hungry you used to make me, with your descriptions of the appetising fare before us; and here we have it now: Ardennes ham, fried in champagne; Ostend oysters, salmi of quails with truffles—and such truffles! Won't that tempt you?"

But his friend paid no attention to the appeal, and walking again to the window, looked out.

"Those little drummers yonder have a busy day of it," said he, lazily; "that's the fourth time they have had to beat the salute to generals this morning."

"Is there anything going on, then?"

But he never deigned an answer, and resumed his walk.

"I wish you'd send away that hissing tea-kettle, it reminds me of a steam-boat," said the captain, peevishly; "that is, if you have done with it."

"So it does," said the other, rising to ring the bell; "there's the same discordant noise, and the—the—the——" But the rest of the similitude wouldn't come, and Mr. Merl covered his retreat with the process of lighting a cigar—an invaluable expedient that had served to aid many a more ready debater in like difficulty.

It would be a somewhat tedious, perhaps not a very profitable task, to inquire how two men, so palpably dissimilar, had thus become what the world calls friends. Enough if we say that Captain Martin—the heir of Cro' Martin—when returning from India on leave, passed some time at the Cape, where, in the not very select society of the place, he met Mr. Merl. Now Mr. Merl had been at Ceylon, where he had something to do with a coffee plantation; and he had been at Benares, where opium interested him; and now again, at the Cape, a question of wine had probably some relation to his sojourn. In fact, he was a man travelling about the world with abundance of leisure, a well-stocked purse, and what our friends over the Strait would term an "industrial spirit." Messes had occasionally invited him to their tables. Men in society got the habit of seeing him "about," and he was in the enjoyment of that kind of tolerance which made every man feel, "He's not *my* friend—*I* didn't introduce him; but he seems a good sort of fellow enough!" And so he was—very good-tempered, very obliging, most liberal of his cigars, his lodgings always open to loungers, with pale ale, and even iced champagne, to be had for asking. There was play, too; and although Merl was a considerable winner, he managed never to incur the jealous enmity that winning so often imposes. He was the most courteous of gamblers; he never did a sharp thing; never enforced a strict rule upon a novice of the game; tolerated every imaginable blunder of his partner with bland equanimity; and, in a word, if this great globe of ours had been a green-baise cloth, and all the men and women whist-players, Mr. Herman Merl had been the first gentleman in it, and carried off "all the honours" in his own hand.

If he was highly skilled in every game, it was remarked of him that he never proposed play himself, nor was he ever known to make a wager: he always waited to be asked to make up a party, or to take or give the odds, as the case might be. To a very shrewd observer, this might have savoured a little too much of a system; but shrewd observers are, after all, not the current coin in the society of young men, and Merl's conduct was eminently successful.

Merl suited Martin admirably. Martin was that species of man which, of all others, is most assailable by flattery. A man of small accomplishments, he sang a little, rode a little, played, drew, fenced, fished, short—all, a little—that is, somewhat better than others in general, and giving him that dangerous kind of pre-eminence, from which, though the tumble never kills, it occurs often enough to bruise and humiliate. But, worse than this, it shrouds its possessor in a triple mail of vanity, that makes him the easy prey of all who minister to it.

We seldom consider how much locality influences our intimacies, and how impossible it had been for us even to know in some places the people we have made friends of in another.

Harry Martin would as soon have thought of proposing his valet at "Brookes's," as walk down Bond-street with Mr. Merl. Had he met him in London, every characteristic of the man would there have stood out in all the strong glare of contrast, but at the Cape it was different. Criticism would have been misplaced where all was irregular, and the hundred little traits —any one of which would have shocked him in England—were only smiled at as the eccentricities of a "good-natured poor fellow, who had no harm in him."

Martin and Merl came to England in the same ship. It was a sudden thought of Merl's, only conceived the evening before she sailed; but Martin had lost a considerable sum at piquet to him on that night, and when signing the acceptances for payment, since he had not the ready money, somewhat peevishly remarked, that it was hard he should not have his revenge. Whereupon Merl, tossing off a bumper of champagne, and appearing to speak under the influence of its stimulation, cried out, "Hang me, captain, if you shall say that! I'll go and take my passage in the *Elphinstone.*" And he did so, and he gave the captain his revenge! But of all the passions, there is not one less profitable to indulge in. They played morning, noon, and night, through long days of sickening calm, through dreary nights of storm and hurricane, and they scarcely lifted their heads at the tidings that the Needles were in sight, nor even questioned the pilot for news of England when he boarded them in the Downs. Martin had grown much older during that same voyage; his temper, too, usually imbued with the easy indolence of his father's nature, had grown impatient and fretful. A galling sense of inferiority to Merl poisoned every minute of his life. He would not admit it, he rejected it, but back it came, and if it did not enter into his heart, it stood there knocking—knocking for admission. Each time they sat down to play was a perfect duel to Martin. As for Merl, his well-schooled faculties never were ruffled nor excited. The game had no power to fascinate *him*, its vicissitudes had nothing new or surprising to him; intervals of ill-luck, days even of dubious fortune might occur, but he knew he would win in the end, just as he knew that though there might intervene periods of bad weather and adverse winds, the good ship *Elphinstone* would arrive at last, and, a day sooner or a day later, discharge passengers and freight on the banks of the Thames.

You may forgive the man who has rivalled you in love—the banker, whose "smash" has engulphed all your fortune—the violent political antagonist, who has assailed you personally, and in the House, perhaps, answered the best speech you ever made, by a withering reply. You may extend feelings of Christian charity to the reviewer who has "slashed" your new novel—the lawyer, whose vindictive eloquence has exposed—the artist in *Punch* who has immortalised—you; but there is one man you never forgive—of whom you will never believe one good thing, and to whom you would wish a thousand evil ones—he is your natural enemy, brought into the world to be your bane, born that he may be your tormentor; and this is the man who *always* beats you at play! Happily, good reader, you may have no feelings of the gambler—you may be of those to whom this fatal vice has never appealed, or appealed in vain; but if you *have* "played," or even mixed with those who have, you couldn't have failed to be struck with the fact, that there is that one certain man from whom you never win! Wherever he is, there, too, is present your evil destiny! Now, there is no pardoning this—the double injury of insult to your skill and damage to your pocket. Such a man as this becomes at last your master. You may sneer at his manners—scoff at his abilities—ridicule his dress—laugh at his vulgarity; poor reprisals these! In his presence, the sense of that one superiority he possesses over you makes you quail! In the stern conflict, where your destiny and your capacity seem alike at issue, he conquers you—not to-day, or to-morrow, but ever and always! There he sits, arbiter of your fate—only doubtful how long he may defer the day of your sentence!

It is something in the vague indistinctness of this power—something that seems to typify the agency of the Evil One himself, that at once tortures and subdues you; and you ever hurry into fresh conflict with the ever present consciousness of fresh defeat! We might have spared our reader this discursive essay but that it pertains to our story. Such was the precise feeling entertained by Martin towards Merl. He hated him with all the concentration of his great hatred, and yet he could not disembarrass himself of his presence. He was ashamed of the man amongst his friends; he avoided him in all public places; he shrunk from his very contact as though infected; but he could not throw off his acquaintance, and he nourished in his heart a small ember of hope that one day or other the scale of fortune would turn, and he might win back again all he had ever lost, and stand free and unembarrassed as in the first hour he had met him! Fifty times had he consulted

Fortune, as it were, to ask if this moment had yet arrived; but hitherto ever unsuccessfully—Merl won on as before. Martin, however, invariably ceased playing when he discovered that his ill-luck continued. It was an experiment—a mere pilot-balloon to Destiny; and when he saw the direction adverse, he did not adventure on the grand ascent. It was impossible that a man of Merl's temperament and training should not have detected this game. There was not a phase of the gambler's mind with which he was not thoroughly familiar.

Close intimacies, popularly called friendships, have always their secret motive, if we be but skilful enough to detect it. We see people associate together of widely different habits, and dispositions the most opposite, with nothing in common of station, rank, object, or pursuit. In such cases the riddle has always its key, could we only find it.

Mr. Martin had been some weeks in Paris with his family, when a brief note informed him that Merl had arrived there. He despatched an answer still briefer, asking him to breakfast on the following morning; and it was in the acceptance of this same invitation we have now seen him.

"Who's here just now?" said Merl, throwing down his napkin and pushing his chair a little back from the table, while he disposed his short fat legs into what he fancied was a most graceful attitude.

"Here? Do you mean in Paris?" rejoined Martin, pettishly; for he never suffered so painfully under this man's intimacy as when his manners assumed the pretension of fashion.

"Yes—of course—I mean, who's in Paris?"

"There are, I believe, about forty-odd thousand of our countrymen and countrywomen," said the other, half contemptuously.

"Oh, I've no doubt; but my question took narrower bounds. I meant, who of *our* set—who of us?"

Martin turned round, and fixing his eyes on him, scanned him from head to foot with a gaze of such intense insolence as no words could have equalled. For a while the Jew bore it admirably; but these efforts, after all, are only like the brief intervals a man can live under water, and where the initiated beats the inexperienced only by a matter of seconds. As Martin continued his stare, Merl's cheek tingled, grew red, and finally his whole face and forehead became scarlet.

With an instinct like that of a surgeon, who feels he has gone deep enough with his knife, Martin resumed his walk along the room without uttering a word.

Merl opened the newspaper, and affected to read; his hand, however, trembled, and his eyes wandered listlessly over the columns, and then furtively were turned towards Martin as he paced the chamber in silence.

"Do you think you can manage that little matter for me, captain?" said he at last, and in a voice attuned to its very humblest key.

"What little matter? Those two bills do you mean?" said Martin, suddenly.

"Not at all. I'm not the least pressed for cash. I alluded to the Club; you promised you'd put me up, and get one of your popular friends to second me."

"I remember," said Martin, evidently relieved from a momentary terror. "Lord Claude Willoughby or Sir Spencer Cavendish would be the men if we could find them."

"Lord Claude, I perceive, is here; the paper mentions his name in the dinner company at the Embassy yesterday."

"Do you know him?" asked Martin, with an air of innocence that Merl well comprehended as insult.

"No. We've met—I think we've played together—I remember once at Baden——"

"Lord Claude Willoughby, sir," said a servant, entering with a card, "desires to know if you're at home?"

"And won't be denied if you are not," said his lordship, entering at the same instant, and saluting Martin with great cordiality.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. MERL.

The French have invented a slang word for a quality that deserves a more recognised epithet, and by the expression "chic" have designated a certain property, by which objects assert their undoubted superiority over all their counterfeits. Thus, your coat from Nugee's, your carriage from Leader's, your bracelet from Storr's, and your bonnet from Madame Palmyre, have all their own peculiar "chic," or, in other words, possess a certain invisible, indescribable essence that stamps them as the best of their kind, with an excellence unattainable by imitation, and a charm all their own!

Of all the products in which this magical property insinuates itself, there is not one to which it contributes so much as the man of fashion. He is the very type of "chic." To describe him you are driven to a catalogue of negatives, and you only arrive at anything like a resemblance by an enumeration of the different things he is not.

The gentleman who presented himself to Martin at the close of our last chapter was in many respects a good specimen of his order. He had entered the room, believing Martin to be there alone; but no sooner had he perceived another, and that other one not known to him, than all the buoyant gaiety of his manner was suddenly toned down into a quiet seriousness; while taking his friend's arm, he said, in a low voice,—

"If you're busy, my dear Martin, don't hesitate for a moment about sending me off; I had not the slightest suspicion there was any one with you."

"Nor is there," said Martin, with a supercilious glance at Merl, who was endeavouring in a dozen unsuccessful ways to seem unaware of the new arrival's presence.

"I want to introduce him to you," said Martin.

"No, no, my dear friend, on no account."

"I must—there's no help for it," said Martin, impatiently, while he whispered something eagerly in the other's ear.

"Well, then—some other day—another time——"

"Here, and now, Claude," said Martin, peremptorily; while, without waiting for reply, he said aloud, "Merl, I wish to present you to Lord Claude Willoughby—Lord Claude, Mr. Herman Merl."

Merl bowed, and smirked, and writhed, as his lordship, with a bland smile and a very slight bow, acknowledged the presentation.

"Had the pleasure of meeting your lordship at Baden two summers ago," said the Jew, with an air meant to be the ideal of fashionable ease.

"I was at Baden at the time you mention," said he, coldly.

"I used to watch your lordship's game with great attention; you won heavily, I think?"

"I don't remember just now," said he, carelessly; not, indeed, that such was the fact, or that he desired it should be thought so, he only wished to mark his sense of what he deemed an impertinence.

"The man who can win at rouge-et-noir can do anything, in my opinion," said Merl.

"What odds are you taking on Rufus?" said Martin to Willoughby, and without paying the slightest attention to Merl's remark.

"Eleven to one; but I'll not take it again. Hecuba is rising hourly, and some say she'll be the favourite yet."

"Is Rufus your lordship's horse?" said the Jew, insinuatingly.

Willoughby bowed, and continued to write in his note-book.

"And you said the betting was eleven to one on the field, my lord?"

"It ought to be fourteen to one, at least."

"I'll give you fourteen to one, my lord, just for the sake of a little interest in the race."

Willoughby ceased writing, and looked at him steadfastly for a second or two. "I have not said that the odds were fourteen to one."

"I understand you perfectly, my lord; you merely thought that they would be, or at least ought to be."

"Merl wants a bet with you, in fact," said Martin, as he applied a light to his meerschaum, "and if you won't have him, I will."

"What shall it be, sir," said Lord Claude, pencil in hand; "in ponies—fifties?"

"Oh, ponies, my lord. I only meant it, just as I said, to give me something to care for in the race."

"Will you put him up at the 'Cercle' after that?" whispered Martin, with a look of sly malice.

"I'll tell you when the match is over," said Willoughby laughing; "but if I won't, here's one that will. That's a neat phaeton of Cavendish's." And at the same instant Martin opened the window, and made a signal with his handkerchief.

"That's the thing for *you*, Merl," said Martin, pointing down to a splendid pair of dark chesnuts harnessed to a handsome phaeton. "It's worth five hundred pounds to any fellow starting an equipage to chance upon one of Cavendish's. He has not only such consummate taste in carriage and harness, but he makes his nags perfection."

"He drives very neatly," said Willoughby.

"What was it he gave for that near-side horse?—a thousand pounds, I think."

"Twelve hundred and fifty, and refused a hundred for my bargain," said a very diminutive, shrewd-looking man of about five-and-thirty, who entered the room with great affectation of juvenility. "I bought him for a cab, never expecting to 'see his like again,' as Shakspeare says."

"And you offered the whole concern yesterday to Damremont for fifty thousand francs?"

"No, Harry, that's a mistake. I said I'd play him a match at piquet, whether he gave seventy thousand for the equipage or nothing. It was he that proposed fifty thousand. Mine was a handsome offer, I think."

"I call it a most munificent one," said Martin. "By the way, you don't know my friend here, Mr. Merl, Sir Spencer Cavendish." And the baronet stuck his glass in his eye and scanned the stranger as unscrupulously as though he were a hack at Tattersall's.

"Where did he dig him up, Claude?" whispered he, after a second.

"In India, I fancy; or at the Cape."

"That fellow has something to do with the hell in St. James's Street; I'll swear I know his face."

"I've been telling Merl that he's in rare luck to find such a turn-out as that in the market; that is, if you still are disposed to sell."

"Oh, yes, I'll sell it; give him the tiger, boots, cockade, and all—everything except that Skye terrier. You shall have the whole, sir, for two thousand pounds; or, if you prefer it——"

"A certain warning look from Lord Claude suddenly arrested his words, and he added, after a moment:

"But I'd rather sell it off, and think no more of it."

"Try the nags; Sir Spencer, I'm sure, will have no objection," said Martin. But the baronet's face looked anything but concurrence with the proposal.

"Take them a turn round the Bois de Boulogne, Merl," said Martin, laughing at his friend's distress.

"And he may have the turn-out at his own price after the trial," muttered Lord Claude with a quiet smile.

"Egad! I should think so," whispered Cavendish; "for assuredly *I* should never think of being seen in it again."

"If Sir Spencer Cavendish has no objection—if he would permit his groom to drive me just down the Boulevards and the Rue Rivoli——"

The cool stare of the baronet did not permit him to finish. It was really a look far more intelligible than common observers might have imagined, for it conveyed something like recognition—a faint approach to an intimation that said, "I'm persuaded that we have met before."

"Yes, that is the best plan. Let the groom have the ribbons," said Martin, laughing with an almost schoolboy enjoyment of a trick. "And don't lose time, Merl, for Sir Spencer wouldn't miss his drive in the Champs Elysées for any consideration."

"Gentlemen, I am your very humble and much obliged servant!" said Cavendish, as soon as Merl had quitted the room. "If that distinguished friend of yours should not buy my carriage——"

"But he will," broke in Martin; "he must buy it."

"He ought, I think," said Lord Claude. "If I were in his place, there's only one condition I'd stipulate for."

"And that is——"

"That you should drive with him one day—one would be enough—from the Barrière de l'Etoile to the Louvre."

"This is all very amusing, gentlemen—most entertaining," said Cavendish, tartly; "but who is he?—I don't mean that—but what is he?"

"Martin's banker I fancy," said Lord Claude.

"Does he lend any sum from five hundred to twenty thousand on equitable terms on approved personal security?" said Cavendish, imitating the terms of the advertisements.

"He'll allow all he wins from you to remain in your hands at sixty per cent. interest, if he doesn't want cash!" said Martin, angrily.

"Oh, then, I'm right. It is my little Moses of St. James's-street. He wasn't always as flourishing as we see him now. Oh dear, if any man, three years back, had told me that this fellow would have proposed seating himself in my phaeton for a drive round Paris, I don't believe—nay, I'm sure—my head couldn't have stood it."

"You know him, then?" said Willoughby.

"I should think every man about town a dozen years ago must know him. There was a kind of brood of these fellows; we used to call them Joseph and his brethren. One sold cigars, another vended maraschino; this discounted your bills, that took your plate or your horses—ay, or your wardrobe—on a bill of sale, and handed you over two hundred pounds to lose at his brother's hell in the evening. Most useful scoundrels they were—equally expert on 'Change and in the Coulisses of the Opera!"

"I will say this for him," said Martin, "he's not a hard fellow to deal with; he does not drive a bargain ungenerously."

"Your hangman is the tenderest fellow in the world," said Cavendish, "till the final moment. It's only in adjusting the last turn under the ear that he shows himself 'ungenerous'"

"Are you deep with him, Harry?" said Willoughby, who saw a sudden paleness come over Martin's face.

"Too deep!" said he, with a bitter effort at a laugh—"a great deal too deep."

"We're all too deep with those fellows," said Cavendish, as, stretching out his legs, he contemplated the shape and lustre of his admirably-fitting boots. "One begins by some trumpery loan or so, thence you go on to a play transaction or a betting-book with them, and you end—egad, you end by having the fellow at dinner!"

"Martin wants his friend to be put up for the Club," said Willoughby.

"Eh, what? At the 'Cercle,' do you mean?"

"Why not? Is it so very select?"

"No, not exactly that; there are the due proportions of odd reputations, half reputations, and no reputations; but remember, Martin, that however black they be now, they all began white. When they started, at least, they were gentlemen."

"I suspect that does not make the case much better."

"No; but it makes *ours* better, in associating with them. Come, come, you know as well as any one that this is impossible, and that if you should do it to-day, I should follow the lead to-morrow, and our Club become only an asylum for unpayable tailors, and unappeasable bootmakers!"

"You go too fast, sir," exclaimed Martin, in a tone of anger. "I never intended to pay my debts by a white ball in the ballot-box, nor do I think that Mr. Merl would relinquish his claim on some thousand pounds, even for the honour of being the Club colleague of Sir Spencer Cavendish."

"Then I know him better," said the other, tapping his boot with his cane; "he would, and he'd think it a right good bargain besides. From seeing these fellows at race-courses and betting-rooms, always cold, calm, and impassive, never depressed by ill-luck, as little elated by good, we fall into the mistake of esteeming them as a kind of philosophers in life, without any of those detracting influences that make you and Willoughby, and even myself, sometimes rash and headstrong. It is a mistake, though; they have a weakness, and a terrible weakness—which is, their passion to be thought in fashionable society. Yes, they can't resist that! All their shrewd calculations, all their artful schemes, dissolve into thin air, at the bare prospect of being recognised 'in society.' I have studied this flaw in them for many a year back. I'll not say I haven't derived advantage from it."

"And yet you'd refuse him admission into a Club," cried Martin.

"Certainly. A club is a Democracy, where each man, once elected, is the equal of his neighbour. Society is, on the other hand, an absolute monarchy, where your rank flows from the fountain of honour—the host. Take him along with you to her grace's 'tea,' or my lady's reception this evening, and see if the manner of the mistress of the house does not assign him his place—as certainly as if he were marshalled to it by a lacquey. All his mock tranquillity, and assumed ease of manner, will not be proof against the icy dignity of a Grande Dame; but in the club he's as good as the best, or he'll think so, which comes to the same thing."

"Cavendish is right—that is, as much so as he can be in anything," said Willoughby, laughing. "Don't put him up, Martin."

"Then what am I to do? I have given a sort of a pledge. He is not easily put off—he does not lightly relinquish an object."

"Take him off the scent. Introduce him at the Embassy. Take him to the Courcelles."

"This is intolerable," broke in Martin, angrily. "I ask for advice, and you reply by a sneer and a mockery."

"Not at all. I never was more serious. But here he comes! Look only how the fellow lolls back in the phaeton. Just see how contemptuously he looks down on the foot travellers. I'd lay on another hundred for that stare; for, assuredly, he has already made the purchase in his own mind."

"Well, Merl, what do you say to Sir Spencer's taste in horseflesh?" said Martin, as he entered.

"They're nice hacks—very smart."

"Nice hacks!" broke in Cavendish, "why, sir, they're both thoroughbred; the near horse is by Tiger out of a Crescent mare, and the off one won the Acton steeplechase. When you said hacks, therefore, you made a cruel blunder."

"Well, it's what a friend of mine called them just now," said Merl; "and remarked, moreover, that the large horse had been slightly fired on the—the—— I forget the name he gave it."

"You probably remember your friend's name better," said Cavendish, sneeringly. "Who was he, pray?"

"Massingbred—we call him Jack Massingbred—he's the Member for somewhere in Ireland."

"Poor Jack!" muttered Cavendish, how hard-up he must be."

"But you like the equipage, Merl?" said Martin, who had a secret suspicion that it was now Cavendish's turn for a little humiliation.

"Well, it's neat. The buggy——"

"The buggy! By Jove, sir, you have a precious choice of epithets! Please to let me inform you that full-blooded horses are not called hacks, nor one of Leader's park-phaetons is not styled a buggy."

Martin threw himself into a chair, and after a moment's struggle, burst out into a fit of laughter.

"I think we may make a deal after all, Sir Spencer," said Merl, who accepted the Baronet's correction with admirable self-control.

"No, sir; perfectly impossible; take my word for it, any transaction would be difficult between us. Good-by, Martin;

adieu Claude." And with this brief leave-taking the peppery Sir Spencer left the room, more flushed and fussy than he had entered it.

"If you knew Sir Spencer Cavendish as long as we have known him, Mr. Merl," said Lord Claude, in his blandest of voices, "you'd not be surprised at this little display of warmth. It is the only weakness in a very excellent fellow."

"I'm hot, too, my lord," said Merl, with the very slightest accentuation of the "initial, H," "and he was right in saying that dealings would be difficult between us."

"You mentioned Massingbred a while ago, Merl. Why not ask him to second you at the Club," said Martin, rousing himself suddenly from a train of thought.

"Well, somehow, I thought that he and you didn't exactly pull together—that there was an election contest—a kind of a squabble."

"I'm sure that *he* never gave you any reason to suspect a coldness between us, I know that *I* never did," said Martin, calmly. "We are but slightly acquainted, it is true, but I should be surprised to learn that there was any ill-feeling between us."

"One's opponent at the hustings is pretty much the same thing as one's adversary at a game—he is against you to-day, and may be your partner to-morrow; so that, putting even better motives aside, it were bad policy to treat him as an implacable enemy," said Lord Claude, with his accustomed suavity. "Besides, Mr. Merl, you know the crafty maxim of the French moralist, 'Always treat your enemies as though one day they were to become your friends.'" And with this commonplace, uttered in a tone and with a manner that gave it all the semblance of a piece of special advice, his lordship took his hat, and, squeezing Martin's hand, moved towards the door.

"Come in here for a moment," said Martin, pushing open the door into an adjoining dressing-room, and closing it carefully after them. "So much for wanting to do a good-natured thing," cried he, peevishly. "I thought to help Cavendish to get rid of those 'screws,' and the return he makes me is to outrage this man."

"What are your dealings with him?" asked Willoughby, anxiously.

"Play matters, play debts, loans, securities, post-obits, and every other blessed contrivance you can think of to swamp a man's present fortune and future prospects. I don't think he is a bad fellow; I mean, I don't suspect he'd press heavily upon me, with any fair treatment on my part. My impression, in short, is, that he'd forgive my not meeting his bill, but he'd never get over my not inviting him to a dinner!"

"Well," said Willoughby, encouragingly, "we live in admirable times for such practices. There used to be a vulgar prejudice in favour of men that one knew, and names that the world was familiar with. It is gone by entirely; and if you only present your friend—don't wince at the title—your friend I say—as the rich Mr. Merl, the man who owns shares in mines, canals, and collieries, whose speculations count by tens of thousands, and whose credit rises to millions, you'll never be called on to apologise for his parts of speech, or make excuse for his solecisms in good breeding."

"Will you put up his name, then, at the Club?" asked Martin, eagerly. "It would not do for *me* to do so."

"To be sure I will, and Massingbred shall be his seconder." And with this cheering pledge Lord Claude bade him good-by, and left him free to return to Mr. Merl in the drawing-room. That gentleman had, however, already departed, to the no small astonishment of Martin, who now threw himself lazily down on a sofa, to ponder over his difficulties and weave all manner of impracticable schemes to meet them.

They were, indeed, very considerable embarrassments. He had raised heavy sums at most exorbitant rates, and obtained money—for the play-table—by pledging valuable reversions of various kinds, for Merl somehow was the easiest of all people to deal with; one might have fancied that he lent his money only to afford himself an occasion of sympathy with the borrower, just as he professed that he merely betted "to have a little interest in the race." Whatever Martin, then, suggested in the way of security never came amiss; whether it were a farm, a mill, a quarry, or a lead mine, he accepted it at once, and, as Martin deemed, without the slightest knowledge or investigation, little suspecting that there was not a detail of hi estate, nor a resource of his property, with which the wily Je was not more familiar than himself. In fact, Mr. Merl was an astonishing instance of knowledge on every subject by which money was to be made, and he no more advanced loans upon an encumbered estate than he backed the wrong horse or bid for a copied picture. There is a species of practical information excessively difficult to describe, which is not connoisseurship, but which supplies the place of that quality, enabling him who possesses it to estimate the value of an object, without any admixture of those weakening prejudices which beset your mere man of taste. Now Mr. Merl had no caprices about the colour of the horse he backed, no more than for the winning seat at cards; he could not be warped from his true interests by any passing whim, and whether he cheapened a Correggio or discounted a bill, he was the same calm, dispassionate calculator of the profit to come of the transaction.

Latterly, however, he had thrown out a hint to Martin that he was curious to see some of that property on which he had made such large advances, and this wish—which, according to the frame of mind he happened to be in at the moment, struck Martin as a mere caprice or a direct menace—was now the object of his gloomy reveries. We have not tracked his steps through the tortuous windings of his moneyed difficulties; it is a chapter in life wherein there is wonderfully little new to record; the Jew lender and his associates, the renewed bill and the sixty per cent., the non-restored acceptances flitting about the world, sold and resold as damaged articles, but always in the end falling into the hands of a "most respectable party," and proceeded on as a true debt; then, the compromises for time, for silence, for secrecy — since these transactions are rarely, if ever, devoid of some unhappy incident that would not bear publicity; and there are invariably little notes beginning "Dear Moses," which would argue most ill-chosen intimacies. These are all old stories, and the *Times* and the *Chronicle* are full of them. There is a terrible sameness about them, too. The dupe and the villain are stock characters that never change, and the incidents are precisely alike in every case. Humble folk, who are too low for fashionable follies, wonder how the self-same artifices have always the same success, and cannot conceal their astonishment at the innocence of our young men about town; and yet the mystery is easily solved. The dupe is, in these cases, just as unprincipled as his betrayer, and their negotiation is simply a game of skill, in which Israel is not always the winner.

If we have not followed Martin's steps through these dreary labyrinths, it is because the path is a worn one; for the same reason, too, we decline to keep him company in his ponderings over them. All that his troubles had taught him was an humble imitation of the tricky natures of those he dealt with; so that he plotted, and schemed, and contrived, till his very head grew weary with the labour. And so we leave him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A YOUNG DUCHESS AND AN OLD FRIEND.

Like a vast number of people who have passed years in retirement, Lady Dorothea was marvellously disappointed with "the world" when she went back to it. It was not at all the kind of thing she remembered, or at least fancied it to be. There were not the old gradations of class strictly defined; there was not the old veneration for rank and station; "society" was invaded by hosts of unknown people, "names one had never heard of." The great stars of fashion of her own day had long since set, and the new celebrities had never as much as heard of her. The great houses of the Faubourg were there, it is true; but with reduced households and dimly-lighted salons, they were but sorry representatives of the splendour her memory had invested them with.

Now the Martins were installed in one of the finest apartments of the finest quarter in Paris. They were people of unquestionable station, they had ample means, lacked for none of the advantages which the world demands from those who seek its favours, and yet there they were, just as unknown, unvisited, and unsought after, as if they were the the Joneses or the Smiths, "out" for a month's pleasuring on the continent.

A solitary invitation to the Embassy to dinner was not followed by any other attention; and so they drove along the Boulevards and through the Bois de Boulogne, and saw some thousands of gay, bright-costumed people, all eager for pleasure, all hurrying on to some scheme of amusement or enjoyment, while they returned moodily to their handsome quarter, as much excluded from all participation in what went on around them as though they were natives of Hayti.

Martin sauntered down to the reading-room, hoping vainly to fall in with some one he knew. He lounged listlessly along the bright streets, till their very glare addled him; he stared at the thousand new inventions of luxury and ease the world had discovered since he had last seen it, and then he plodded gloomily homeward, to dine and listen to her ladyship's discontented criticism upon the tiresome place and the odious people who filled it. Paris was, indeed, a deception and a snare to them! So far from finding it cheap, the expense of living—as they lived—was considerably greater than at London. It was a city abounding in luxuries, but all costly. The details which are in England reserved for days of parade and display, were here daily habits, and these were now to be indulged in with all the gloom of solitude and isolation.

What wonder, then, if her ladyship's temper was ruffled, and her equanimity unbalanced by such disappointments? In vain she perused the list of arrivals to find out some distinguished acquaintance; in vain she interrogated her son as to what was going on, and who were there. The captain only frequented the club, and could best chronicle the names that were great at whist or illustrious at billiards.

"It surely cannot be the season here," cried she, one morning, peevishly, "for really there isn't a single person one has ever heard of at Paris."

"And yet this is a strong catalogue," cried the captain, with a malicious twinkle in his eye. "Here are two columns of somebodies, who were present at Madame de Luygnes' last night."

"You can always fill salons, if that be all," said she, angrily.

"Yes, but not with Tour du Pins, Tavannes, Rochefoucaulds, Howards of Malden, and Greys of Allington, besides such folk as Pahlen, Lichtenstein, Colonna, and so forth."

"How is it, then, that one never sees them?" cried she, more eagerly.

"Say, rather, how is it one doesn't know them," cried Martin, "for here we are seven weeks, and, except to that gorgeous fellow in the cocked hat at the porter's lodge, I have never exchanged a salute with a human being."

"There are just three houses, they say, in all Paris, to one or other of which one must be presented," said the captain—"Madame de Luygnes, the Duchesse de Courcelles, and Madame de Mirecourt."

"That Madame de Luygnes was your old mistress, was she not, Miss Henderson?" asked Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"Yes, my lady," was the calm reply.

"And who are these other people?"

"The Duc de Mirecourt was married to 'mademoiselle,' the daughter of the Duchesse de Luygnes."

"Have you heard or seen anything of them since you came here?" asked her ladyship.

"No, my lady, except a hurried salute yesterday from a carriage as we drove in. I just caught sight of the duchess as she waved her hand to me."

"Oh, I saw it. I returned the salutation, never suspecting it was meant for *you*. And she was your companion—your dear friend—long ago?"

"Yes, my lady," said Kate, bending down over her work, but showing in the crimson flush that spread over her neck how the speech had touched her.

"And you used to correspond, I think?" continued her ladyship.

"We did so, my lady."

"And she dropped it, of course, when she married—she had other things to think of?"

"I'm afraid, my lady, the lapse was on *my* side," said Kate, scarcely repressing a smile at her own hardihood.

"*Your* side! Do you mean to say that you so far forgot what was due to the station of the Duchesse de Mirecourt, that you left her letter unreplied to?"

"Not exactly, my lady."

"Then, pray, what do you mean?"

Kate paused for a second or two, and then, in a very calm and collected voice, replied:

"I told the duchesse, in my last letter, that I should write no more—that my life was thrown in a wild, unfrequented region, where no incident broke the monotony, and that were I to continue our correspondence, my letters must degenerate into a mere selfish record of my own sentiments, as unprofitable to read as ungraceful to write; and so I said good-by—or *au revoir*, at least—till other scenes might suggest other thoughts."

"A most complimentary character of our Land of the West, certainly! I really was not aware before that Cro' Martin was regarded as an 'oubliette.'"

Kate made no answer—a silence which seemed rather to irritate than appease her ladyship.

"I hope you included the family in your dreary picture. I trust it was not a mere piece of what artists call still life, Miss Henderson?"

"No, my lady," said she, with a deep sigh; but the tone and manner of the rejoinder were anything but apologetic.

"Now I call that as well done as anything one sees in Hyde Park," cried the captain, directing attention as he spoke to a very handsome chariot which had just driven up to the door. "They're inquiring for somebody here," continued he, as he watched the Chasseur as he came and went from the carriage to the house.

"There's a Grandee of Spain, or something of that kind, lives on the fourth floor, I think," said Martin, drily.

"The Duchesse de Mirecourt, my lady," said a servant, entering, "begs to know if your ladyship will receive her?"

Kate started at the words, and her colour rose till her cheeks were crimsoned.

"A visit, I suspect, rather for you than me, Miss Henderson," said Lady Dorothea, in a half whisper. And then turning to her servant, nodded her acquiescence.

"I'm off," said Martin, rising suddenly to make his escape.

"And I too," said the captain, as he made his exit by an opposite door.

The folding-doors of the apartment were at the same moment thrown wide, and the duchess entered. Very young—almost girlish, indeed—she combined in her appearance the charming freshness of youth with that perfection of gracefulness which attaches to the higher classes of French society, and although handsome, more striking from the fascination of manner than for any traits of beauty. Curtseying slightly, but deferentially, to Lady Dorothea, she apologised for her intrusion by the circumstance of having, the day before, caught sight of her "dear governess and dear friend——" And as she reached thus far, the deep-drawn breathing of another attracted her. She turned and saw Kate, who, pale as a statue, stood leaning on a chair. In an instant she was in her arms, exclaiming, in a rapture of delight, "My dear, dear Kate—my more than sister! You would forgive me, madam," said she, addressing Lady Dorothea, "if you but knew what we were to each other. Is it not so, Kate?"

A faint tremulous motion of the lips—all colourless as they were—was the only reply to the speech; but the young Frenchwoman needed none, but turning to her ladyship, poured forth with native volubility a story of their friendship, the graceful language in which she uttered it lending those choice phrases which never seem exaggerations of sentiment till they be translated into other tongues. Mingling her praises with half reproaches, she drew a picture of Kate so flattering, that Lady Dorothea could not help a sense of shrinking terror that one should speak in such terms of the governess.

"And now, dearest," added she, turning to Kate, "are we to see a great deal of each other? When can you come to me? Pardon me, madam, this question should be addressed to you."

"Miss Henderson is my secretary, Madame la Duchesse; she is also my companion," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily; "but I can acknowledge claims which take date before my own. She shall be always at liberty when you wish for her."

"How kind, how good of you," cried the duchesse, "I could have been certain of that. I knew that my dear Kate must be loved by all around her. We have a little *fête* on Wednesday at St. Germain. May I bespeak her for that day?"

"Her ladyship suffers her generosity to trench upon her too far," said Kate, in a low voice. "I am in a manner necessary to her—that is, my absence would be inconvenient."

"But her ladyship will doubtless be in the world herself that evening. There is a ball at the Duchesse de Sargance, and the Austrian Minister has something," rattled on the lively duchesse. "Paris is so gay just now, so full of pleasant people, and all so eager for enjoyment. Don't you find it so, my lady?"

"I go but little into society!" said Lady Dorothea, stiffly.

"How strange; and I—I cannot live without it. Even when we go to our Château at Roche-Mire I carry away with me all my friends who will consent to come. We try to imitate that delightful life of your country-houses and make up that great family party which is the *beau idéal* of social enjoyment."

"And you like a country life, then?" asked her ladyship.

"To be sure. I love the excursions on horseback, the forest drives, the evening walks in the trellised vines, the parties one makes to see a thousand things one never looks at afterwards; the little dinners on the grass, with all their disasters, and the moonlight drive homewards, half joyous, half romantic—not to speak of that charming frankness by which every one makes confession of his besetting weakness, and each has some little secret episode of his own life to tell the others. All but Kate here," cried she, laughingly, "who never revealed anything."

"Madame la Duchess will, I'm sure, excuse my absence; she has doubtless many things she would like to say to her friend alone," said Lady Dorothea, rising and curtseying formally; and the young duchesse returned the salutation with equal courtesy and respect.

"My dear, dear Kate," cried she, throwing her arms around her as the door closed after her ladyship, "how I have longed for this moment, to tell you ten thousand things about myself and hear from you as many more. And first, dearest, are you happy? for you look more serious, more thoughtful than you used—and paler, too."

"Am I so?" asked Kate, faintly.

"Yes. When you're not speaking, your brows grow stern and your lips compressed. Your features have not that dear repose, as Giorgevo used to call it. Poor fellow! how much in love he was, and you've never asked for him!"

"I never thought of him!" said she, with a smile.

"Nor of Florian, Kate!"

"Nor even of him."

"And yet that poor fellow was really in love—nay, don't laugh, Kate, I know it. He gave up his career—everything he had in life—he was a Secretary of Legation, with good prospects—all to win your favour, becoming a 'Carbonaro,' or a 'Montagnard,' or something or other that swears to annihilate all Kings and extirpate Monarchy."

"And after that?" asked Kate, with more of interest.

"After that, ma chère, they sent him to the galleys; I forget exactly where, but I think it was in Sicily. And then there was that Hungarian Count Nemescz, that wanted to kill somebody who picked up your bouquet out of the Grand Canal at Venice."

"And whom, strangely enough, I met and made acquaintance with in Ireland. His name is Massingbred."

"Not the celebrity, surely—the young politician who made such a sensation by a first speech in Parliament t'other day? He's all the rage here. Could it be him?"

"Possibly enough," said she, carelessly. "He had very good abilities, and knew it."

"He comes to us occasionally, but I scarcely have any acquaintance with him. But this is not telling me of yourself, child. Who and what are these people you are living with? Do they value my dear Kate as they ought? Are they worthy of having her amongst them?"

"I'm afraid not," said Kate, with a smile. "They do not seem at all impressed with the blessing they enjoy, and only treat me as one of themselves."

"But, seriously, child, are they as kind as they should be? That old lady is, to my thinking, as austere as an Archduchess."

"I like her," said Kate; "that is, I like her cold, reserved manner, unbending as it is, which only demands the quiet duties of servitude, and neither asks nor wishes for affection. She admits me to no friendship, but she exacts no attachment."

"And you like this?"

"I did not say I should like it from *you!*" said Kate, pressing the hand she held fervently to her lips, while her pale cheek grew faintly red.

"And you go into the world with her—at least, *her* world?"

"She has none here. Too haughty for second-rate society, and unknown to those who form the first class at Paris, she never goes out."

"But she would—she would like to do so?"

"I'm sure she would."

"Then mamma shall visit her. You know she is everything here; her house is the rendezvous of all the distinguished people, and, once seen in her salons, my Lady ——how do you call her?"

"Lady Dorothea Martin."

"I can't repeat it—but no matter—her ladyship shall not want for attentions. Perhaps she would condescend to come to me on Wednesday? Dare I venture to ask her?"

Kate hesitated, and the duchess quickly rejoined:

"No dearest, you are quite right; it would be hazardous, too abrupt, too unceremonious. You will, however, be with us; and I long to present you to all my friends, and show them one to whom I owe so much, and ought to be indebted to for far more. I'll send for you early, that we may have a long morning together." And so saying she arose to take leave.

"I feel as though I'll scarcely believe I had seen you when you have gone," said Kate, earnestly. "I'll fancy it all a dream—or rather, that my life since we met has been one, and that we had never parted."

"Were we not very happy then, Kate?" said the duchess, with a half-sigh; "happier, perhaps, than we may ever be again."

"*You* must not say so, at all events," said Kate, once more embracing her. And they parted.

Kate arose and watched the splendid equipage as it drove away, and then slowly returned to her place at the work-table. She did not, however, resume her embroidery, but sat deep in reflection, with her hands clasped before her.

"Poor fellow," said she, at length, "a galley-slave, and Massingbred a celebrity! So much for honesty and truth in this good world of ours! Can it always go on thus? That is the question I'm curious to hear solved. A little time may, perhaps, reveal it!" And so saying to herself, she leaned her head upon her hand, deep lost in thought.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A VERY GREAT FAVOUR.

Amongst the embarrassments of story-telling there is one which, to be appreciated, must have been experienced; it is, however, sufficiently intelligible to claim sympathy even by indicating—we mean the difficulty a narrator has in the choice of those incidents by which his tale is to be marked out, and the characters who fill it adequately depicted.

It is quite clear that a great number of events must occur in the story of every life of which no record can be made, some seem too trivial, some too irrelevant for mention, and yet, when we come to reflect upon real life itself, how many times do we discover that what appeared to be but the veriest trifles were the mainsprings of an entire existence, and the incidents which we deemed irrelevant were the hidden links that connected a whole chain of events? How easy, then, to err in the selection! This difficulty presents itself strongly to us at present; a vast number of circumstances rise before us from which we must refrain, lest they should appear to indicate a road we are not about to travel, and, at the same time, we feel the want of those very events to reconcile what may well seem contradictions in our history.

It not unfrequently happens that an apology is just as tiresome as the offence it should excuse, and so, without further explanation, we proceed. Lady Dorothea soon found herself as much sought after as she had previously been neglected. The Duchesse de Luygnes was the great leader of fashion at Paris, and the marked attentions by which she distinguished her ladyship at once established her position. Of course her unquestionable claim to station, and her own high connexions, rendered the task less difficult, while it imparted to Lady Dorothea's own manner and bearing that degree of dignity and calm which never accompany an insecure elevation.

With such refinement of delicacy, such exquisite tact, was every step managed, that her ladyship was left to suppose every attention she received sprung out of her own undeniable right to them, and to the grace and charm of a manner which really had had its share of success some five-and-thirty years before. The gloomy isolation she had passed through gave a stronger contrast to the enjoyment of her present life, and for the first time for years she regained some of that courtly elegance of address, which in her youth had pre-eminently distinguished her. The change had worked favourably in her temper also; and Martin perceived, with astonishment, that she neither made injurious comparisons between the present and the past, nor deemed the age they lived in one of insufferable vulgarity. It would scarcely have been possible for Lady Dorothea not to connect her altered position with the friendship between Kate Henderson and her former pupil: she knew it, and she felt it. All her self-esteem could not get over this consciousness; but it was a humiliation reserved for her own heart, since nothing in Kate's manner indicated even a suspicion of the fact. On the contrary, never had she shown herself more submissive and dependent. The duties of her office, multiplied as they were tenfold by her ladyship's engagements, were all punctually acquitted, and with a degree of tact and cleverness that obtained from Lady Dorothea the credit of a charming note-writer. Nor was she indifferent to the effect Kate produced in society, where her beauty and fascination had already made a deep impression.

Reserving a peculiar deference and respect for all her intercourse with Lady Dorothea, Kate Henderson assumed to the world at large the ease and dignity of one whose station was the equal of any. There was nothing in her air or bearing that denoted the dependant; there was rather a dash of haughty superiority, which did not scruple to avow itself and bid defiance to any bold enough to question its claims. Even this was a secret flattery to Lady Dorothea's heart; and she saw with satisfaction the success of that imperious tone which to herself was subdued to actual humility.

Lady Dorothea Martin and her beautiful companion were now celebrities at Paris, and assuredly no city of the world knows how to shower more fascinations on those it favours. Life became to them a round of brilliant festivities. They received invitations from every quarter, and everywhere were met with that graceful welcome so sure to greet those whose airs and whose dress are the ornaments of a salon. They "received" at home, too; and her ladyship's Saturdays were about the most exslusive of all Parisian receptions. Tacitly at least, the whole management and direction of these "Evenings" was committed to Kate. Martin strictly abstained from a society in every way distasteful to him. The captain had come to care for nothing but play, so that the Club was his only haunt; and it was the rarest of all events to see him pass even a few minutes in the drawing-room. He had, besides, that degree of shrinking dislike to Kate Henderson, which a weak man very often experiences towards a clever and accomplished girl. When he first joined his family at Paris, he was struck by her great beauty and the elegance of a manner that might have dignified any station, and he fell partly in love—that is to say, as much in love as a captain of hussars could permit himself to feel for a governess. He condescended to make small advances, show her petty attentions, and even distinguish her by that flattering stare, with his glass to his eye, which he had known to be what the poet calls "blush-compelling" in many a fair cheek in provincial circles.

To his marvellous discomfiture, however, these measures were not followed by any success. She never as much as seemed aware of them, and treated him with the same polite indifference as though he had been neither a hussar nor a lady-killer. Of course he interpreted this as a piece of consummate cunning; he had no other measure for *her* capacity than would have been suited to his own; she was a deep one, evidently bent on drawing him on, and entangling him in some stupid declaration, and so he grew cautious. But, somehow, his reserve provoked as little as his boldness. She did not change in the least; she treated him with a quiet, easy sort of no-notice—the most offensive thing possible to one bent upon being impressive, and firmly persuaded that he need only wish, to be the conqueror.

Self-worship was too strong in him to suffer a single doubt as to his own capacity for success, and therefore the only solution to the mystery of her manner was its being an artful scheme, which time and a little watching would surely explain. Time went on, and yet he grew none the wiser—Kate continued the same impassive creature as at first. She never sought—never avoided him. She met him without constraint—without pleasure too. They never became intimate, while there was no distance in their intercourse; till at last, wounded in his self-esteem, he began to feel that discomfort in her presence which only waits for the slightest provocation to become actual dislike.

With that peevishness that belongs to small minds, he would have been glad to have discovered some good ground for hating her, and a dozen times a day did he fancy that he had "hit the blot," but somehow he always detected his mistake ere long; and thus did he live on in that tantalising state of uncertainty and indecision which combines about as much suffering as men of his stamp are capable of feeling.

If Lady Dorothea never suspected the degree of influence Kate silently exercised over her, the captain saw it palpably, and tried to nourish the knowledge into a ground for dislike. But somehow she would no more suffer herself to be hated than to be loved, and invariably baffled all his attempts to "get up" an indignation against her. By numberless devices—too slight, too evanescent to be called regular coquetry—she understood how to conciliate him, even in his roughest moods, while she had only to make the very least possible display of her attractions to fascinate him, in his happier moments. The gallant hussar was not much given to self-examination. It was one of the last positions he would have selected, and yet he had confessed to his own heart, that, though he'd not like to marry her himself, he'd be sorely tempted to shoot any man who made her his wife.

Lady Dorothea and Kate Henderson were seated one morning engaged in the very important task of revising the invitation-book—weeding out the names of departed acquaintance, and canvassing the claims of those who should succeed them. The rigid criticism as to eligibility showed how great an honour was the card for her ladyship's "Tea." While they were thus occupied, Captain Martin entered the room with an open letter in his hand, his air and manner indicating flurry, if not actual agitation.

"Sorry to interrupt a privy council," said he, "but I've come to ask a favour—don't look frightened, it's not for a woman, my Lady—but I want a card for your next Saturday, for a male friend of mine."

"Kate has just been telling me that 'our men' are too numerous."

"Impossible. Miss Henderson knows better than any one that the success of these things depends on having a host of men—all ages, all classes, all sorts of people," said he, indolently.

"I think we have complied with your theory," said she, pointing to the book before her. "If our ladies are chosen for their real qualities, the men have been accepted with a most generous forbearance."

"One more, then, will not damage the mixture."

"Of course, Captain Martin, it is quite sufficient that he is a friend of yours—that you wish it——"

"But it is no such thing, Miss Henderson," broke in Lady Dorothea. "We have already given deep umbrage in many quarters—very high quarters, too—by refusals, and a single mistake would be fatal to us."

"But why need this be a mistake?" cried Captain Martin, peevishly. "The man is an acquaintance of mine—a friend, if you like to call him so."

"And who is he?" asked my lady, with all the solemnity of a judge.

"A person I met at the Cape. We travelled home together—saw a great deal of each other—in fact—I know him as intimately as I do—any officer in my regiment," said the captain, blundering and faltering at every second word.

"Oh! then he is one of your own corps?" said her ladyship.

"I never said so," broke he in. "If he had been, I don't fancy I should need to employ much solicitation in his behalf; the —th are not usually treated in that fashion!"

"I trust we should know how to recognise their merits," said Kate, with a look which sorely puzzled him whether it meant conciliation or raillery.

"And his name?" asked my lady. "His name ought to be decisive, without anything more!"

"He's quite a stranger here; knows nobody, so that you incur no risk as to any impertinent inquiries, and when he leaves this, to-morrow or next day, you'll never see him again." This the captain said with all the confusion of an inexpert man in a weak cause.

"Shall I address his card, or will you take it yourself, Captain Martin?" said Kate, in a low voice.

"Write Merl—Mr. Herman Merl," said he, dropping his own voice to the same tone.

"Merl!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea, whose quick hearing detected the words. "Why, where on earth could you have made acquaintance with a man called Merl?"

"I have told you already where and how we met, and if it be any satisfaction to you to know that I am under considerable obligations—heavy obligations—to this same gentleman, perhaps it might incline you to show him some mark of attention."

"You could have him to dinner at your Club—you might even bring him here, when we're alone, Harry; but really, to receive him at one of our Evenings! You know how curious people are, what questions they will ask: 'Who is that queer-looking man?'—I'm certain he is so.—'Is he English?' 'Who does he belong to?' 'Does he know any one?'"

"Let them ask *me*, then," said Martin, "and I may, perhaps, be able to satisfy them." At the same moment he took up from the table the card which Kate had just written, giving her a look of grateful recognition as he did so.

"You've done this at your own peril, Miss Henderson," said Lady Dorothea, half upbraidingly.

"At *mine* be it, rather," said the captain, sternly.

"I accept my share of it willingly," said Kate, with a glance which brought a deep flush over the hussar's cheek, and sent through him a strange thrill of pleasure.

"Then I am to suppose we shall be honoured with your own presence on this occasion—rare favour, that it is," said her ladyship.

"Yes, I'll look in. I promised Merl to present him."

"Oh! you needn't," said she, peevishly; "half the men merely make their bow when they meet me, and neither expect me to remember who they are, or to notice them. I may leave your distinguished friend in the same category."

A quick glance from Kate—fleeting, but full of meaning—stopped Martin, as he was about to make a hasty reply. And, crumpling up the card with suppressed passion, he turned and left the room.

"Don't put that odious name on our list, Miss Henderson," said Lady Dorothea; "we shall never have him again."

"I'm rather curious to see him," said Kate. "All this discussion has imparted a kind of interest to him, not to say that there would seem something like a mystery in Captain Martin's connexion with him."

"I confess to no such curiosity," said my lady, haughtily. "The taste to be amused by vulgarity, is like the passion some people have to see an hospital—you may be interested by the sight, but you may catch a malady for your pains." And with this observation of mingled truth and fallacy her ladyship sailed proudly out of the room, in all the conscious importance of her own cleverness.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LETTER FROM HOME.

While this discussion was going on, Martin was seated in his own room examining the contents of his letter-bag, which the post had just delivered to him. A very casual glance at his features would have discovered that the tidings which met his eye were very rarely of a pleasant character. For the most part the letters were importunate appeals for money, subscriptions, loans, small sums, to be repaid when the borrower had risen above his present difficulties, aids to effect some little enterprise on whose very face was failure. Then there were the more formal demands for sums actually due, written in the perfection of coercive courtesy, subjecting the reader to all the tortures of a moral surgical operation, a suffering actually increased by the very dexterity of the manipulator. Then came, in rugged hand and gnarled shape, urgent entreaties for abatements and allowances, pathetic pictures of failing crops, sickness, and sorrow! Somewhat in contrast to these in matter—most strikingly unlike them in manner—was a short note from Mr. Maurice Scanlan. Like a rebutting witness in a cause, he spoke of everything as going on favourably; prices were fair, the oat crop a reasonable one; there was distress, to be sure, but who ever saw the West without it? The potatoes had partially failed, but as there was a great deal of typhus and a threat of cholera, there would be fewer to eat them. The late storms had done a good deal of mischief, but as the timber thrown down might be sold without any regard to the entail, some thousand pounds would thus be realised, and as the gale had carried away the new pier at Kilkieran, there would be no need to give a bounty to the fishermen who could not venture out to sea. The damage done to the house and the conservatories at Cro' Martin offered an opportunity to congratulate the owner on the happiness of living in a milder climate, while the local squabbles of the borough suggested the pleasant contrast with all the enjoyments of a life abroad.

On the whole, Mr. Scanlan's letter was rather agreeable than the reverse, since he contrived to accompany all the inevitable ills of fortune by some side-wind consolations, and when pushed hard for these, skilfully insinuated in what way "things might have been worse." If the letter did not reflect very favourably on either the heart or brain that conceived it, it well suited him to whom it was addressed. To screen himself from whatever might irritate him; to escape an unpleasant thought or unhappy reflection; to avoid, above all things, the slightest approach of self-censure, was Martin's great philosophy, and he esteemed the man who gave him any aid in this road. Now newspapers might croak their dark predictions about the coming winter, prophesy famine, fever, and pestilence, Scanlan's letter, "written from the spot," by "one who enjoyed every opportunity for forming a correct opinion," was there, and *he* said matters were pretty much as usual. The west of Ireland had never been a land of milk and honey, and nobody expected it ever would be—the people could live in it, however, and pay rents too—and as Martin felt that he had no undue severity to reproach himself with, he folded up the epistle, saying that "when a man left his house and property for a while, it was a real blessing to have such a fellow as Scanlan to manage for him;" and truly, if one would have his conscience kept for a few hundreds a year, the compact might be a pleasant one. But even to the most self-indulgent this plan is impracticable; and so might it now be seen in Martin's heightened colour and fidgety manner, and that even *he* was not as much at ease within as he wished to persuade himself he was.

Amid the mass of correspondence, pamphlets, and newspapers, one note, very small and neatly folded, had escaped Martin's notice till the very last; and it was only as he heaped up a whole bundle to throw into the fire that he discovered this, in Mary's well-known hand. He held it for some time ere he broke the seal, and his features assumed a sadder, graver cast than before. His desertion of her—and he had not blinked the word to himself—had never ceased to grieve him; and however disposed he often felt to throw upon others the blame which attached to himself, here, he attempted no casuistry, but stood quietly, without one plea in his favour, before his own heart.

The very consciousness of his culpability had prevented him writing to her as he ought: his letters were few, short, and constrained. Not all the generous frankness of hers could restore to him the candid ease of his former intercourse with her; and every chance expression he used was conned over and canvassed by him, lest it might convey some sentiment, or indicate some feeling foreign to his intention. At length so painful had the task become that he had ceased writing altogether, contenting himself with a message through Kate Henderson—some excuse about his health, fatigue, and so forth, ever coupled with a promise that he would soon be himself again, and as active a correspondent as she could desire.

To these apologies Mary always replied in a kindly spirit; whatever sorrow they might have cost her she kept for herself; they never awakened one expression of impatience, not a word of reproach. She understood him thoroughly—his easy indolence of disposition, his dislike to a task, his avoidance of whatever was possible to defer, more even than all these, his own unforgiveness of himself for his part towards her. To alleviate, so far as she might, the poignancy of the last, was for a while the great object of all her letters; and so she continued to expatiate on the happy life she was leading, her contentment with the choice she had made of remaining there, throwing in little playful sallies of condolence at her uncle's banishment, and jestingly assuring him how much happier he would be at home!

In whatever mood, however, she wrote, there was a striking absence of whatever could fret or grieve her uncle throughout all her letters. She selected every pleasant topic and the favourable side of every theme to tell of. She never forgot any little locality which he had been partial to, or any of the people who were his favourites; and, in fact, it might have seemed that the great object she had in view was to attach him more and more to the home he had left, and strengthen every tie that bound him to his own country. And all this was done lightly and playfully, and with a pleasant promise of the happiness he should feel on the day of his return.

These letters were about the pleasantest incidents in Martin's present life, and the day which brought him one was sure to pass agreeably, while he made vigorous resolutions about writing a reply, and sometimes got even so far as to open a desk and ruminate over an answer. It so chanced that now a much longer interval had occurred since Mary's last letter, and the appearance of the present note, so unlike the voluminous epistle she usually despatched, struck him with a certain dismay. "Poor Molly," said he, as he broke the seal, "she is growing weary at last; this continued neglect is beginning to tell upon her; a little more, and she'll believe—as well she may—that we have forgotten her altogether."

The note was even briefer than he had suspected. It was written, too, in what might seem haste, or agitation, and the signature forgotten. Martin's hand trembled, and his chest heaved heavily as he read the following lines:

"Cro' Martin, Wednesday Night.

"DEAREST UNCLE,

"You will not suffer these few lines to remain unanswered, since they are written in all the pressure of a great emergency. Our worst fears for the harvest are more than realised: a total failure in the potatoes—a great diminution in the oat crop; the incessant rains have flooded all the low meadows, and the cattle are almost without forage, while from the same cause no turf can be cut, and even that already cut and stacked cannot be drawn away from the bogs. But, worse than all these, typhus is amongst us, and cholera, they say, coming. I might stretch out this dreary catalogue, but here is enough, more than enough, to awaken your sympathies and arouse you to action. There is a blight on the land: the people are starving—dying. If every sense of duty was dead within us, if we could harden our hearts against every claim of those from whose labour we derive ease, from whose toil we draw wealth and leisure, we might still be recalled to better things by the glorious heroism of these poor people, so nobly courageous, so patient are they in their trials. It is not now that I can speak of the traits I have witnessed of their affection, their charity, their self-denial, and their daring—but now is the moment to show them that we, who have been dealt with more favourably by fortune, are not devoid of the qualities which adorn their nature.

"I feel all the cruelty of narrating these things to you, too far away from the scene of sorrow to aid by your counsel and encourage by your assistance; but it would be worse than cruelty to conceal from you that a terrible crisis is at hand, which will need all your energy to mitigate.

"Some measures are in your power, and must be adopted at once. There must be a remission of rent almost universally, for the calamity has involved all; and such as are a little richer than their neighbours should be aided, that they may be the more able to help them. Some stores of provisions must be provided to be sold at reduced rates, or even given gratuitously. Medical aid must be had, and an hospital of some sort established. The able-bodied must be employed on some permanent work; and for these, we want power from you and some present moneyed assistance. I will not harrow your feelings with tales of sufferings. You have seen misery here—enough; I say—you have witnessed nothing like this, and we are at but the beginning.

"Write to me at once yourself—this is no occasion to employ a deputy—and forgive me, dearest uncle, for I know not what faults of presumption I may have here committed. My head is confused; the crash of misfortunes has addled me, and each succeed so rapidly on each other, that remedies are scarcely employed than they have to be abandoned. When, however, I can tell the people that it is their own old friend and master that sends them help, and bids them to be of good cheer—when I can show them that, although separated by distance, your heart never ceases to live amongst them—I know well the magic working of such a spell upon them, and how, with a bravery that the boldest soldier never surpassed, they will rise up against the stern foes of sickness and famine, and do battle with hard fortune manfully.

"You have often smiled at what you deemed my exaggerated opinion of these poor people—my over-confidence in their capacity for good. Oh—take my word for it—I never gave them credit for one-half the excellence of their natures. They are on their trial now, and nobly do they sustain it!

"I have no heart to answer all your kind questions about myself—enough that I am well—as little can I ask you about all your doings in Paris. I'm afraid I should but lose temper if I heard that they were pleasant ones, and yet, with my whole soul, I wish you to be happy; and with this,

"Believe me your affectionate

"Mr. Repton has written me the kindest of letters, full of good advice and good sense; he has also enclosed me a cheque for 100*l.*, with an offer of more, if wanted. I was low and depressed when his note reached me, but it gave me fresh energy and hope. He proposed to come down here if I wished; but how could I ask such a sacrifice—how entreat him to face the peril?"

"Tell Captain Martin I wish to speak to him," said Martin, as he finished the perusal of this letter. And in a few minutes after, that gallant personage appeared, not a little surprised at the summons.

"I have got a letter from Mary here," said Martin, vainly endeavouring to conceal his agitation as he spoke, "which I want to show you. Matters are in a sad plight in the West. She never exaggerates a gloomy story, and her account is very afflicting. Read it."

The captain lounged towards the window, and, leaning listlessly against the wall, opened the epistle.

"You have not written to her lately, then?" asked he, as he perused the opening sentence.

"I am ashamed to say I have not; every day I made a resolution, but, somehow——"

"Is all this anything strange or new?" broke in the captain. "I'm certain I have forty letters from my mother with exactly the same story. In fact, before I ever broke the seal, I'd have wagered an equal fifty that the potatoes had failed, the bogs were flooded, the roads impassable, and the people dying in thousands; and yet, when spring came round, by some happy miracle they were all alive and merry again!"

"Read on," said Martin, impatiently, and barely able to control himself at this heartless commentary.

"Egad! I'd have sworn I had read all this before, except these same suggestions about not exacting the rents, building hospitals, and so forth; that *is* new. And why does she say, 'Don't write by deputy?' Who *was* your deputy?"

"Kate Henderson has written for me latterly."

"And I should say she's quite equal to that sort of thing; she dashes off my mother's notes at score, and talks away, too, all the time she's writing."

"That is not the question before us," said Martin, sternly. "When I sent for you to read that letter, it was that you might advise and counsel me what course to take."

"If you can afford to give away a year's income in the shape of rent, and about as much more in the shape of a donation, of course you're quite free to do it. I only wish that your generosity would begin at home though, for I own to you I'm very hard-up at this moment." This the captain spoke with an attempted jocularity, which decreased with every word, till it subsided into downright seriousness ere he finished.

"So far from being in a position to do an act of munificence, I am sorely pressed for money," said Martin.

The captain started; the half-smile with which he had begun to receive this speech died away on his lips as he asked, "Is this really the case?"

"Most truly so," said Martin, solemnly.

"But how, in the name of everything absurd—how is this possible? By what stratagem could you have spent five thousand a year at Cro' Martin, and your estate was worth almost three times as much? Giving a very wide margin for waste and robbery, I'd say five thousand could not be made away with there in a twelvemonth."

"Your question only shows me how carelessly you must have read my letters to you, in India," said Martin, "otherwise you could not have failed to see the vast improvements we have been carrying out on the property—the roads, the harbours, the new quarries opened, the extent of ground covered by plantation—all the plans, in fact, which Mary had matured——"

"Mary! Mary!" exclaimed the captain. "And do you tell me that all these things were done at the instigation of a young girl of nineteen or twenty, without any knowledge, or even advice——"

"And who said she was deficient in knowledge?" cried Martin. "Take up the map of the estate, see the lands she has reclaimed, look at the swamps you used to shoot snipe over bearing corn crops, see the thriving village, where once the boatmen were starving, for they dared not venture out to sea without a harbour against bad weather."

"Tell me the cost of all this. What's the figure?" said the captain; "that's the real test of all these matters, for if *your* income could only feed this outlay, I pronounce the whole scheme the maddest thing in Christendom. My mother's taste for carved oak cabinets and historical pictures is the quintessence of wisdom in comparison."

Martin was overwhelmed and silent, and the other went on:

"Half the fellows in 'ours' had the same story to tell—of estates wasted, and fine fortunes squandered in what are called improvements. If the possession of a good property entails the necessity to spend it all in this fashion, one is a very little better than a kind of land-steward to one's own estate; and, for my part, I'd rather call two thousand a year my own, to do what I pleased with, than have a nominal twenty, of which I must disburse nineteen."

"Am I again to remind you that this is not the question before us?" said Martin, with increased sternness.

"That is exactly the very question," rejoined the captai. "Mary here coolly asks you, in the spirit of this same improvement-scheme, to relinquish a year's income, and make a present of I know not how much more, simply because things are going badly with them, just as if everybody hasn't their turn of ill-fortune. Egad, I can answer for it, *mine* hasn't been flourishing latterly, and yet I have heard of no benevolent plan on foot to aid or release me!"

To this heartless speech, uttered, however, in most perfect sincerity, Martin made no reply whatever, but sat with folded arms, deep in contemplation. At length, raising his head, he asked, "And have you, then, no counsel to give—no suggestion to make me?"

"Well," said he suddenly, "if Mary has not greatly overcharged all this story——"

"That she has not," cried Martin, interrupting him. "There's not a line, not a word of her letter, I'd not guarantee with all I'm worth in the world."

"In that case," resumed the captain, in the same indolent tone, "they must be in a sorry plight, and *I* think ought to cut and run as fast as they can. I know that's what *we* do in India: when the cholera comes, we break up the encampment, and move off somewhere else. Tell Mary, then, to advise them to keep out of 'the jungle,' and make for the 'hill country.'"

Martin stared at the speaker for some seconds, and it was evident how difficult he found it to believe that the words he had just listened to were uttered in deliberate seriousness.

"If you have read that letter, you certainly have not understood it," said he at last, in a voice full of melancholy meaning.

"Egad, it's only too easy of comprehension," replied the captain; "of all things in life, there's no mistaking a demand for money."

"Just take it with you to your own room, Harry," said Martin, with a manner of more affection than he had yet employed. "It is my firm persuasion, that when you have re-read and thought over it, your impression will be a different one. Con it over in solitude, and then come back and give me your advice."

The captain was not sorry to adopt a plan which relieved him so speedily from a very embarrassing situation, and, folding up the note, he turned and left the room.

There are a great number of excellent people in this world who believe that "Thought," like "Ecarté," is a game which requires two people to play. The captain was one of these; nor was it within his comprehension to imagine how any one individual could suffice to raise the doubts he was called on to canvass or decide. "Who should he now have recourse to?" was his first question; and he had scarcely proposed it to himself, when a soft, low voice said, "What is puzzling Captain Martin?—can I be of any service to him?" He turned and saw Kate Henderson.

"Only think how fortunate!" exclaimed he. "Just come in here to this drawing-room, and give me your advice."

"Willingly," said she, with a curtsey, the more marked because his manner indicated a seriousness that betokened trouble.

"My father has just dismissed me to cogitate over this epistle; as if, after all, when one has read a letter, that any secret or mystical interpretation is to come, by all the reconsideration and reflection in the world."

"Am I to read it?" asked Kate, as he placed it in her hand.

"Of course you are," said he.

"There is nothing confidential or private in it which I ought not to see?"

Nothing; and if there were," added he, warmly, "*you* are one of ourselves, I trust—at least, *I* think you so."

Kate's lips closed with almost stern impressiveness, but her colour never changed at this speech, and she opened the letter in silence. For some minutes she continued to read with the same impassive expression; but gradually her cheek became paler, and a haughty, almost scornful, expression settled on her lips. "So patient are they in their trials," said she, reading aloud the expression of Mary's note. "Is it not possible, Captain Martin, that patience may be pushed a little beyond a virtue, and become something very like cowardice — abject cowardice?"—"And then," cried she impetuously, and not waiting for his reply, "to say that now is the time to show these poor people the saving care and protection that the rich owe them, as if the duty dated from the hour of their being struck down by famine—laid low by pestilence! or that the debt could ever be acquitted by the relief accorded to pauperism! Why not have taught these same famished creatures self-dependence, elevated them to the rank of civilized beings by the enjoyment of rights that give men self-esteem as well as liberty? What do you mean to do, sir?—or is that your difficulty?" cried she, hastily changing her tone to one of less energy.

"Exactly—that is *my difficulty*. My father, I suspect, wishes me to concur in the pleasant project struck out by Mary, and that, by way of helping *them*, we should ruin *ourselves*."

"And *you* are for——" She stopped, as if to let him finish her question for her.

"Egad, I don't know well what I'm for, except it be self-preservation. I mean," said he, correcting himself, as a sudden glance of almost insolent scorn shot from Kate's eyes towards him—"I mean, that I'm certain more than half of this account is sheer exaggeration. Mary is frightened—as well she may be—finding herself all alone, and hearing nothing but the high-coloured stories the people bring her, and listening to calamities from morning to night."

"But still it *may* be all true," said Kate, solemnly. "It may be—as Miss Martin writes—that 'there is a blight on the land.'"

"What's to be done, then?" asked he, in deep embarrassment.

"The first step is to ascertain what is fact—the real extent of the misfortune."

"And how is that to be accomplished?" asked he.

"Can you not think of some means?" said she, with a scarcely perceptible approach to a smile.

"No, by Jove! that I cannot, except by going over there, one's self."

"And why not that?" asked she, more boldly, while she fixed her large full eyes directly upon him.

"If *you* thought that I ought to go—if you advised it, and would actually say 'Go'——"

"Well, if I should?"

"Then I'd set off to-night; though to say truth, neither the journey nor the business are much to my fancy."

"Were they ten times less so, sir, I'd say, 'Go,'" said she, resolutely.

"Then go I will," cried the captain; "and I'll start within two hours."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. MERL'S DEPARTURE.

WORTHY reader, you are neither weak of purpose nor undecided in action; as little are you easily moved by soft influences, when aided by long eyelashes. But had you been so, it would have been no difficult effort for you to comprehend the state of mind in which Captain Martin repaired to his room to make preparation for his journey. There was a kind of half chivalry in his present purpose that nerved and supported him. It was like a knight-errant of old setting out to confront a peril at the behest of his lady-love; but against this animating conviction there arose that besetting sin of small minds—a sense of distrust—a lurking suspicion that he might be, all this while, nothing but the dupe of a very artful woman.

"Who can tell," said he to himself, "what plan she may have in all this, or what object she may propose to herself in getting *me* out of the way? I don't think she really cares one farthing about the distress of these people, supposing it all to be true; and as to the typhus fever and cholera, egad! if they be there, one ought to think twice before rushing into the midst of them. And then, again, what do I know about the country or its habits? I have no means of judging if it be poorer, or sicklier, or more wretched than usual. To *my* eyes, it always seemed at the lowest depth of want and misery; every one went half starved and more than half naked. I'm sure there is no necessity for my going some few hundred and odd miles to refresh my memory on this pleasant fact; and yet this is precisely what I'm about to do. Is it by way of trying her power over me? By Jove, I've hit it!" cried he, suddenly, as he stopped arranging a mass of letters which he was reducing to order before his departure. "That's her game; there's no doubt of it! She has said to herself, 'This will prove him.

If he do this at my bidding, he'll do more.' Ay, but will he, mademoiselle? that's the question. A young hussar may turn out to be a very old soldier. What if I were just to tell her so. Girls of her stamp like a man all the better when he shows himself to be wide-awake. I'd lay a fifty on it she'll care more for me when she sees I'm her own equal in shrewdness. And, after all, why should *I* go? I could send my valet, Fletcher—just the kind of fellow for such a mission—never knew the secret he couldn't worm out; there never was a bit of barrack scandal he didn't get to the bottom of. He'd be back here within a fortnight, with the whole state of the case, and I'll be bound there will be no humbugging *him*."

This bright idea was not, however, without its share of detracting reflections, for what became of all that personal heroism on which he reposed such hope, if the danger were to be encountered by deputy? This was a puzzle, not the less that he had not yet made up his mind whether he'd really be in love with Kate Henderson, or only involve *her* in an unfortunate attachment for *him*. While he thus pondered and hesitated, strewing his room with the contents of drawers and cabinets, by way of aiding the labour of preparation, his door was suddenly opened, and Mr. Merl made his appearance. Although dressed with all his habitual regard to effect, and more than an ordinary display of chains and trinkets, that gentleman's aspect betokened trouble and anxiety; at least, there was a certain restlessness in his eye that Martin well understood as an evidence of something wrong within.

"Are you getting ready for a journey, captain?" asked he, as he entered.

"I was thinking of it; but I believe I shall not go. I'm undecided."

"Up the Rhine?"

"No; not in that direction."

"South—towards Italy, perhaps?"

"Nor there either. I was meditating a trip to England."

"We should be on the road together," said Merl. "I'm off by four o'clock."

"How so? What's the reason of this sudden start?"

"There's going to be a crash here," said Merl, speaking in a lower tone. "The Government have been doing the thing with too high a hand, and there's mischief brewing."

"Are you sure of this?" asked Martin.

"Only too sure, that's all. I bought in, on Tuesday last, at sixty-four and an eighth, and the same stock is now fifty-one and a quarter, and will be forty to-morrow. The day after——" Here Mr. Merl made a motion with his outstretched arm, to indicate utter extinction.

"You're a heavy loser, then?" asked Martin, eagerly.

"I shall be, to the tune of some thirteen thousand pounds. It was just on that account I came in here. I shall need money within the week, and must turn those Irish securities of yours into cash—some of them at least—and I want a hint from you as to which I ought to dispose of and which hold over. You told me one day, I remember, that there was a portion of the property likely to rise greatly in value——"

"*You* told *me*, sir," said Captain Martin, breaking suddenly in, "when I gave you these same bonds, that they should remain in your own hands, and never leave them. That was the condition on which I gave them."

"I suppose, captain, you gave them for something; you did not make a present of them," said the Jew, colouring slightly.

"If I did not make a present of them," rejoined Martin, "the transaction was about as profitable to me."

"You owed me the money, sir; that, at least, is the way I regard the matter."

"And when I paid it by these securities, you pledged yourself not to negotiate them. I explained to you how the entail was settled—that the property must eventually be mine—and you accepted the arrangement on these conditions."

"All true, captain; but nobody told me, at that time, there was going to be a revolution in Paris—which there will be within forty-eight hours."

"Confounded fool that I was to trust the fellow!" said Martin to himself, but quite loud enough to be heard; then turning to Merl, he said, "What do you mean by converting them into cash? Are you about to sell part of our estate?"

"Nothing of the kind, captain," said Merl, smiling at the innocence of the question. "I am simply going to deposit these where I can obtain an advance upon them. I promise you, besides, it shall not be in any quarter by which the transaction can reach the ears of your family. This assurance will I trust, satisfy *you*, and entitle *me* to the information I ask for."

"What information do you allude to?" asked Martin, who had totally forgotten what the Jew announced as the reason of his visit.

"I asked you, captain," said Merl, resuming the mincing softness of his usual manner, "as to which of these securities might be the more eligible for immediate negotiation?"

"And how should I know, sir?" replied the other, rudely "I am very little acquainted with the property itself; I know still less about the kind of dealings you speak of. It does not concern me in the least what you do, or how you do it. I believe I may have given you bonds for something very like double the amount of all you ever advanced to me. I hear of nothing from my father but the immense resources of this, and the great capabilities of that; but as these same eventualities are not destined to better *my* condition, I have not troubled my head to remember anything about them. You have a claim of about twenty thousand against me."

"Thirty-two thousand four hundred and seventy-eight pounds," said the Jew, reading from a small note-book which he had just taken from his waistcoat pocket.

"That is some ten thousand more than ever I heard of," said Martin, with an hysterical sort of laugh. "Egad, Merl, the fellows were right that would not have you in the 'Cercle.' You'd have 'cleared every man of them out'—as well let a ferret into a rabbit warren."

"I wasn't aware—I had not heard that I was put up——"

"To be sure you were; in all form proposed, seconded, and duly blackballed. I own to you, I thought it very hard, very illiberal. There are plenty of fellows there that have no right to be particular, and so Jack Massingbred as much as told them. The fact is, Merl, you ought to have waited a while, and by the time that Harlowe, and Spencer Cavendish, and a few more such were as deep in your books as I am, you'd have had a walk over. Willoughby says the same. It might have cost you something smart, but you'd have made it pay in the end—eh, Merl?"

To this speech, uttered in a strain of jocular impertinence, Merl made no reply. He had just torn one of his gloves in pieces in the effort to draw it on, and he was busily exerting himself to get rid of the fragments.

"Lady Dorothea had given me a card for you for Saturday," resumed the captain, "but as you're going away—— Besides, after this defeat at the Club, you couldn't well come amongst all these people; so there's nothing for it but patience, Merl, patience."

"A lesson that may be found profitable to others, perhaps," said the Jew, with one of his furtive looks at the captain, who quailed under it at once.

"I was going to give you a piece of advice, Merl," said he, in a tone the very opposite to his late bantering one. "It was, that you should just take a run over to Ireland yourself, and see the property."

"I mean to do so, Captain Martin," said the other, calmly.

"I can't offer you letters, for they would defeat what you desire to accomplish; besides, there is no member of the family there at present but a young lady-cousin of mine."

"Just the kind of introduction I'd like," said the Jew, with all the zest of a man glad to say what he knew would be deemed an impertinence.

Martin grew crimson with suppressed anger, but never spoke a word.

"Is this the Cousin Mary I have heard you speak of," said Merl—"the great horse-woman, and she that ventures out alone on the Atlantic in a mere skiff?"

Martin nodded. His temper was almost an overmatch for him, and he dare not trust himself to speak.

"I should like to see her amazingly, captain," resumed Merl.

"Remember, sir, you have no lien upon *her*," said Martin, sternly.

The Jew smirked and ran his fingers through his hair with the air of one who deemed such an eventuality by no means so very remote.

"Do you know, Master Merl," said Martin, staring at him from head to foot with an expression the reverse of complimentary, "I'm half disposed to give you a few lines to my cousin; and if you'll not take the thing as a 'mauvais plaisanterie' on my part, I will do so."

"Quite the contrary, captain. I'll deem it a great favour indeed," said Merl, with an admirable affectation of unconsciousness.

"Here goes then," said Martin, sitting down to a table, and preparing his writing materials, while in a hurried hand he began:

"'DEAR COUSIN MARY,—This will introduce to you Mr Herman Merl, who visits your remote regions on a tour of——' What shall I say?"

"Pleasure—amusement," interposed Merl.

"No, when I *am* telling a fib, I like a big one—I'll say, Philanthropy, Merl; and there's nothing so well adapted to cover those secret investigations you are bent upon—a tour of Philanthropy.

"'You will, I am sure, lend him all possible assistance in his benevolent object—the same being to dispose of the family acres—and at the sametime direct his attention to whatever may be matter of interest—whether mines, quarries, or other property easily convertible into cash—treating him in all respects as one to whom I owe many obligations—and several thousand pounds.'

"Will that do, think you?"

"Perfectly—nothing better."

"In return, I shall ask one favour at your hands," said Martin, as he folded and addressed the epistle. "It is, that you write me a full account of what you see in the west—how the country looks, and the people. Of course it will all seem terribly poor and destitute, and all that sort of thing, to your eyes, but just try and find out if it be worse than usual. Paddy is such a shrewd fellow, Merl, that it will require all your own sharpness not to be taken in by him. A long letter full of detail—a dash of figures in it—as to how many sheep have the rot, or how many people have caught the fever, will improve it—you know the kind of thing I mean—and—I don't suppose you care about shooting, yourself, but you'll get some one to tell you—are the birds plenty and in good condition. There's a certain Mr. Scanlan, if you chance upon him, he's up to everything, and not a bad performer at dummy whist—though I think *you* could teach him a thing or two." Merl smiled and tried to look flattered, while the other went on: "And there's another, called Henderson, the steward, a very shrewd person—but *you* don't need all these particulars—you may be trusted to your own good guidance—eh, Merl?"

Merl again smiled in the same fashion as before; in fact, so completely had he resumed the bland expression habitual to him, that the captain almost forgot the unpleasant cause of his visit, and all the disagreeable incidents of the interview.

"You couldn't give me a few lines to this Mr. Scanlan?" asked Merl, with an air of easy indifference.

"Nothing easier," cried the captain, reseating himself the suddenly rising, with the expression of one to whom a sudden thought had just crossed the mind, "Wait one second for me here, Merl; I'll be back with you at once." And as he spoke he dashed out of the room, and hastened to his father.

"By a rare piece of luck," cried he, as he entered, "I've just chanced upon the very fellow we want; an acquaintance I picked up at the Cape—up to everything—he goes over to Ireland to-night, and he'll take a run down to Cro' Martin, and send us his report of all he sees. Whatever he tells us may be relied upon, for, depend upon't, no lady can humbug *him*. I've just given him a note for Mary, and I'll write a few lines also by way of introducing him to Scanlan."

Martin could barely follow the captain, as with rapid utterance he poured forth this plan. "Do I know him? What's his name?" asked he at last.

"You never saw him. His name is Merl—Herman Merl—a fellow of considerable wealth—a great speculator—one of those Stock Exchange worthies who never deal in less than tens of thousands. He has a crotchet in his head about buying up half the West of Ireland—some scheme about flax and the deep-sea fishery. I don't understand it, but I suppose *he* does. At all events, he has plenty of money, and the head to make it fructify; and if he only take a liking to it, he's the very fellow to buy up Kilkieran, and the islands, and the rest of that waste district you were telling me of t'other night. But I mustn't detain him. He starts at four o'clock, and I only ran over here to tell you not to worry yourself any more about Mary's letter. He'll look to it all."

And with this consolatory assurance the captain hastened away, leaving Martin as much relieved in mind as an indolent nature and an easy conscience were sure to make him. To get anybody "to look to" anything, had been his whole object in life; to know that, whatever happened, there was always somebody who misstated this, or neglected that, at whose door all the culpability—where there was such—could be laid, and, but for whom, he had himself performed miracles of energy and devotedness, and endured all the tortures and trials of a martyr. He was, indeed, as are a great many others in this world, an excellent man to his own heart—kind, charitable, and affectionate; a well-wisher to his kind, and hopeful of almost every one; but, all this while, his virtues, like a miser's gold, had no circulation, they remained locked up within him for his own use alone, and there he sat, counting them over and gazing at them, speculating upon all that this affluence could do, and—never doing it!

Life abounds with such men. They win respect while they live, and white marble records their virtues when they die! Nor are they all useless. Their outward bearing at least simulates whatever we revere in good men, and we accept them in the same spirit of compromise as we take stucco for stone,—if they do no more, they show our appreciation of the "real article."

The captain was not long in inditing a short note to Scanlan, to whom, "strictly confidential," Mr. Merl was introduced as a great capitalist and speculator, desirous to ascertain all the resources of the land. Scanlan was enjoined to show him every attention, making his visit in all respects as agreeable as possible.

"This fellow will treat you well, Merl," said the captain, as he folded the letter, "will give you the best salmon you ever tasted, and a glass of Gordon's Madeira such as few could sport now-a-days. And if you have a fancy for a day with my Cousin Mary's hounds, he'll mount you admirably, and show you the way besides." And with this speech Martin wished him good-by, and closing the door after him, added, "And if he'll kindly assist you to a broken neck, it's about the greatest service he could render me!"

The laugh, silly and meaningless, that followed his utterance of this speech, showed that it was spoken in all the listlessness of one who had not really character enough to be even a "good hater."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CLUB.

So little impression had Merl's gloomy forebodings made upon Captain Martin, that he actually forgot everything that this shrewd gentleman predicted, and only partially recalled them when the conversation the next morning at the Club turned on the disturbed state of the capital. People in "Society" find it excessively difficult to believe in anything like an organised opposition to the authorities of a Government. They are so accustomed to hear of street assemblages being scattered by a few soldiers, mobs routed by a handful of mounted policemen, that they are slow to imagine how any formidable movement can take its rise in such a source. But the maladies of states, like those of the human frame, are often mere trifles in their origin; chance, and the concurrence of events, swell their importance, till they assume an aspect of perhaps greater menace than they deserve. This is essentially the case in revolutionary struggles, where, at the outset, none ever contemplates the extent to which the mischief may reach. The proclamation of the "Ordinances" as they were called had produced a great excitement in Paris. Groups of men in every street were gathered around some one reading aloud the violent commentaries of the public papers; thoughtful and stern faces were met at every corner; a look of expectancy—an expression that seemed to say, What next?—was perceptible on all sides. Many of the shops were half closed, and in some, the objects of great value were withdrawn to places of greater security. It was clear to see that men apprehended some great crisis, but whence it should come, or by whose instrumentality promoted, none seemed able to guess. Now and then a mounted orderly would ride by at a smart trot, or a patrol party of dragoons dash past, and the significant glance that followed them indicated how full of meaning these signs appeared.

The day passed in this state of anxious uncertainty, and although the journals discussed the condition of the capital as full of danger and menace, an ostentatious announcement in the *Moniteur* proclaimed Paris to be tranquil. In society—at least in the world of fashion and high life—there were very few who would have disputed the official despatch. "Who and what were they who could dispute the King's Government? Who and where were there either leaders or followers? In what way should they attempt it? The troops in and around Paris numbered something over forty thousand, commanded by an old Marshal of the Empire, now the trustiest adherant of loyalty. The days of Mirabeaus, and Robespierres, and Dantons had passed away, nor were these times in which men would like to recal the reigns of terror and the guillotine." So they reasoned —or, if the phrase be too strong—so they talked, who lounged on soft-cushioned ottomans, or moved listlessly over luxurious carpets—all agreeing that it would be treasonable in the Ministers to retreat or abate one jot of the high prerogative of the Crown. Powdered heads shook significantly, and gold-embroidered vests heaved indignantly, at the bare thought that the old spirit of '95 should have survived amongst them, but not one dreamed that the event boded seriously, or that the destinies of a great nation were then in the balance.

It is but five-and-twenty years ago, and how much more have we learned of the manufacture of revolutions in the interval! Barricades and street warfare have become a science, and the amount of resistance a half-armed populace can offer to a regular force is as much a matter of certainty as a mathematical theorem. At that period, however, men were but in the infancy of this knowledge; the traditions of the great revolution scarcely were remembered, and, for the most part, they were inapplicable.

What wonder, then, if people in society smiled scornfully at the purposeless masses that occasionally moved past beneath their windows, shouting with discordant voices some fragments of the Marseillaise, or, as they approached the residence of any in authority, venturing on the more daring cry of "Down with the Ordinances!" The same tone of haughty contempt pervaded "the Club." Young men of fashion, little given to the cares of political life, and really indifferent to the action of laws which never invaded the privileges of the play-table, or ourtailed one prerogative of the "Coulisses," felt an angry impatience at all the turbulence and riot of the public streets.

In a magnificently furnished salon of the Club a number of these young men were now assembled. Gathered from every nation of Europe, many of them bearing names of high historical interest, they were, so far as dress, air, and appearance went, no ignoble representatives of the class they belonged to. The proud and haughty Spaniard, the fierce-eyed, daring-looking Pole; the pale, intellectual-faced Italian; the courteous Russian, and the fair-haired, stalwart Saxon, were all there; and, however dissimilar in type, banded together by the magic influence of the "set" they moved in, to an almost perfect uniformity of sentiment and opinion.

"I vote that any man be fined ten Louis that alludes, however remotely, to this confounded question again," cried Count Gardoni, rising impatiently from his chair and approaching a card-table.

"And I second you!" exclaimed a Polish prince, with a Russian decoration at his button-hole.

"Carried *nem. con.*," said Captain Martin, seating himself at the play-table. "And now for the 'Lansquenet.'" And in a moment every seat was occupied, and purses of gold and pocket-books of bank-notes were strewed over the board. They were all men who played high, and the game soon assumed the grave character that so invariably accompanies large wagers. Wonderfully little passed, except the terms of the game itself. Gambling is a jealous passion, and never admits its votaries to wander in their attention. And now large sums passed from hand to hand, and all the passions of hope and fear racked heads and hearts around, while a decorous silence prevailed, or, when broken, some softly-toned voice alone interrupted the stillness.

"Are you going, Martin?" whispered the young French Count de Nevers, as the other moved noiselessly back from the table.

"It is high time, I think," said Martin; "this is my seventeenth night of losing—losing heavily, too. I'm sick of it!"

"Here's a chance for you, Martin," said a Russian prince, who had just assumed "the bank." "You shall have your choice of colour, and your own stake."

"Thanks—but I'll not be tempted."

"I say red, and a thousand francs," cried a Neapolitan.

"There's heavier play outside, I suspect," said Martin, as a wild hoarse shout from the streets re-echoed through the room.

"A fine—a fine—Martin is fined!" cried several around the table.

"You haven't left me wherewithal to pay it, gentlemen," said he, laughing. "I was just about to retire, a bankrupt, into private life."

"That's platoon fire," exclaimed the Pole, as the loud detonation of small arms seemed to shake the very room.

"Czernavitz also fined," cried two together.

"I bow in submission to the Court," said the Pole, throwing down the money on the table.

"Lend *me* as much more!" said Martin; "it may change my luck." And with this gambler's philosophy he again drew nigh the table.

This slight interruption over, the game proceeded as before. Martin, however, was now a winner, every wager succeeding, and every bet he made a gain.

"There's nothing like a dogged persistence," said the Russian. "Fortune never turns her back on him who shows constancy. See Martin, now; by that very resolution he has conquered, and here we are, all cleared out!"

"I am, for one," cried an Italian, flinging his empty purse on the table.

"There's my last Louis," said Nevers. "I reserve it to pay for my supper."

"Martin shall treat us all to supper!" exclaimed another.

"Where shall it be, then," said Martin; "here, or at my own quarters?"

"Here, by all means," cried some.

"I'm for the Place Vendôme," said the Pole, "for who knows but we shall catch a glimpse of that beautiful girl, Martin's 'Belle Irlandaise.'"

"I saw her to-night," said the Italian, "and I own she *is* all you say. She was speaking to Villemart, and I assure you the old Minister won't forget it in a hurry. Something or other he said about the noise in the street drew from him the word 'canaille.' She turned round at once and attacked him. He replied, and the controversy grew warm; so much so, that many gathered around them to listen, amongst whom I saw the Duc de Guiche, Prince du Saulx, and the Austrian Minister. Nothing could be more perfect than her manner—calm, without any effrontery; assured, and yet no sacrifice of delicacy. It was easy to see, too, that the theme was not one into which she stumbled by an accident; she knew every event of the Great

Revolution, and used the knowledge with consummate skill, and, but for one slip, with consummate temper also."

"What was the slip you allude to?" cried the Russian.

"It was when Villemart, after a boastful enumeration of the superior merits of his order, called them the 'Enlighteners of the People.'

"'You played that part on one occasion,' said she; 'but I scarcely thought you'd like to refer to it.'

"'How so? When do you mean?' asked he.

"'When they hung you to the lanterns,' said she, with the energy of a tigress in her look. Pardié! at that moment I never saw anything so beautiful or so terrible."

A loud uproar in the street without, in which the sound of troop-horses passaging to and fro could be distinguished, now interrupted the colloquy. As the noise increased, a low, deep roar, like the sound of distant thunder, could be heard, and the Pole cried out:

"Messieurs les Sans-culottes, I strongly advise you to turn homewards, for, if I be not much mistaken, here comes the artillery."

"The affair may turn out a serious one, after all," broke in the Italian.

"A serious one!" echoed the Pole, scornfully. "How can it? Forty battalions of infantry, ten thousand sabres, and eight batteries; are they not enough, think you, to rout this contemptible herd of street rioters?"

"There—listen! It has begun already!" exclaimed Martin, as the sharp report of fire-arms, quite close to the windows, was followed by a crash, and then a wild, mad shout, half rage, half defiance.

"There's nothing for it, in these things, but speedy action," said the Pole; "grape and cavalry charges to clear the streets, and rifle practice at anything that shows itself at the windows."

"It is so easy, so very easy, to crush a mob," said the Russian, "if you only direct your attention to the leader—think of nothing but *him*. Once you show, that, whatever may be the fate of others, death must be his, the whole assemblage becomes a disorganised, unwieldy mass, to be sabred or shot down at pleasure."

"Soldiers have no fancy for this kind of warfare," said De Nevers, haughtily; "victory is never glorious, defeat always humiliation."

"But who talks of defeat?" exclaimed the Pole, passionately. "The officer who could fail against such an enemy should be shot by a court-martial. We have, I believe, every man of us here, served, and I ask you, what disproportion of force could suggest a doubt of success?"

As he spoke, the door of the room was suddenly opened, and a young man, with dress all disordered, and the fragment of a hat in his hand, entered.

"What, Massingbred!" cried one, "how came you to be so roughly handled?"

"So much for popular politeness!" exclaimed the Russian, as he took up the tattered remains of a dress-coat, and exhibited it to the others.

"Pardon me, prince," replied Massingbred, as he filled a glass of water and drank it off, "this courtesy I received at the hands of the military. I was turning my cab from the Boulevard to enter this street, when a hoarse challenge of a sentry, saying I know not what, attracted my attention. I drew up short to learn, and then suddenly came a rush of the people from behind, which terrified my horse, and set him off at speed; the uproar increasing, the affrighted animal dashed madly onward, the crowd flying on every side, when suddenly a bullet whizzed past my head, cutting my hat in two; a second, at the same instant, struck my horse, and killed him on the spot, cab and all rolling over as he fell. How I arose, gained my legs, and was swept away by the dense torrent of the populace, are events of which I am very far from clear. I only know, that although the occurrence happened within half an hour ago, it seems to *me* an affair of days since."

"You were, doubtless, within some line of outposts when first challenged," said the Pole, "and the speed at which you drove was believed to be an arranged plan of attack, for you say the mob followed you."

"Very possibly your explanation is the correct one," said Massingbred, coolly; "but I looked for more steadiness and composure from the troops, while I certainly did not anticipate so much true courtesy and kindness as I met with from the people."

"Parbleu! here's Massingbred becoming Democrat," said one. "The next thing we shall hear is his defence of a barricade."

"You'll assuredly not hear that I attacked one in such company as inflicted all this upon me," rejoined he, with an easy smile.

"Here's the man to captivate your 'Belle Irlandaise,' Martin," cried one. "Already is he a hero and a martyr to Royal cruelty."

"Ah! you came to late to hear that," said the Pole, in a whisper to Massingbred; "but it seems La Henderson became quite a Charlotte Corday this evening, and talked more violent Republicanism than has been heard in a salon since the days of old Egalité."

"All lights must be extinguished, gentlemen," said the waiter. entering hastily. "The street is occupied by troops, and you must pass out by the Rue de Grenelle."

"Are the mobs not dispersing, then?" asked the Russian.

"No, your highness. They have beaten back the troops from the Quai Voltaire, and are already advancing on the Louvre."

"What adsurdity!" exclaimed the Pole. "If the troops permit this, there is treason amongst them."

"I can answer for it there is terror, at least," said Massingbred. "All the high daring and spirit is with what you would call the Sans-culottes."

"That a man should talk this way because he has lost a cab-horse!" cried the Pole, insolently.

"There are men who can bear the loss of a country with more equanimity—I know that," whispered Massingbred in his ear, with all the calm sternness of an insult.

"You mean this for *me?*" said the Pole, in a low voice.

"Of course I do," was the answer.

"Where?—when?—how? muttered the Pole, in suppressed passion.

"I leave all at your disposal," said Massingbred, smiling at the other's effort to control his rage.

"At Versailles—to-morrow morning—pistols."

Massingbred bowed, and turned away. At the same instant the waiter entered to say that the house must be cleared at once, or all within it consent to remain close prisoners.

"Come along, Martin," said Massingbred, taking his arm. "I shall want you to do me a favour. Let us make our escape by the Rue de Grenelle, and I'll engage to pilot you safely to your own quarters."

"Has anything passed between you and Czernavitz?" asked Martin, as they gained the street.

"A slight exchange of civilities, which requires an exchange shots," said Jack, calmly.

"By George; I'm sorry for it. He can hit a franc-piece at thirty paces."

"So can I, Martin; and, what's more, Anatole knows it. He's as brave as a lion, and it is my confounded skill has pushed him on to this provocation."

"He'll shoot you," muttered Martin, in a half reverie.

"Not impossible," said Massingbred. "He's a fellow who cannot conceal his emotions, and will show at once what he means to do."

"Well, what of that?"

"Simply, that if he intends mischief I shall know it, and send a bullet through his heart."

Little as Martin had seen of Massingbred—they were but Club acquaintances of a few weeks back—he believed that he was one of those smart, versatile men, who, with abundance of social ability, acquire reputation for higher capacity than they possess; but, above all, he never gave him credit for anything like a settled purpose or a stern resolution. It was, then, with considerable astonishment that he now heard him avow this deadly determination with all the composure that could vouch for its sincerity. There was, however, little time to think of these things. The course they were driven to follow, by by-streets and alleys, necessitated a long and difficult way. The great thoroughfares which they crossed at intervals were entirely in the possession of the troops, who challenged them as they approached, and only suffered them to proceed when well satisfied with their account. The crowds had all dispersed, and to the late din and tumult there had succeeded the deep silence of a city sunk in sleep, only broken by the hoarse call of the sentinels, or the distant tramp of a patrol.

"It is all over, I suppose," said Martin. "The sight of the eight-pounders and the dark caissons has done the work."

"I don't think so," said Massingbred, "nor do the troops think so. These mobs are not like ours in England, who, with plenty of individual courage, are always poltroons in the mass. These fellows understand fighting as an art, know how to combine their movements, arrange the modes of attack or defence, can measure accurately the means of resistance opposed to them, and, above all, understand how to be led—something far more difficult than it seems. In *my* good borough of Oughterard—or yours, rather, Martin, for I have only a loan of it—a few soldiers—the army, as they would call them—would sweep the whole population before them. Our countrymen can get up a row, these fellows can accomplish a revolt—there's the difference."

"And have they any real, substantial grievance that demands such an expiation?"

"Who knows?" said he, laughingly. "There never was a government too bad to live under—there never was one exempt from great vices. Half the political disturbances the world has witnessed have arisen from causes remote from State Government—a deficient harvest, a dear loaf, the liberty of the press invaded—a tyranny always resented by those who can't read—are common causes enough. But here we are now at the Place Vendôme, and certainly one should say the odds are against the people."

Massingbred said truly. Two battalions of infantry, with a battery of guns in position, were flanked by four squadrons of Cuirassiers, the formidable array filling the entire "Place," and showing by their air and attitude their readiness for any eventuality. A chance acquaintance with one of the staff enabled Massingbred and Martin to pass through their lines and arrive at their hotel.

"Remember," said the officer who accompanied them, "that you are close prisoners, now. My orders are, that nobody is to leave the Place under any pretext."

"Why, you can scarcely suspect that the Government has enemies in this aristocratic quarter?" said Massingbred, smiling.

"We have them everywhere," was the brief answer, as he bowed and turned away.

"I scarcely see how I'm to keep my appointment at Versailles to-morrow morning," said Massingbred, as he followed Martin up the spacious stairs. "Happily, Czernavitz knows me, and will not misinterpret my absence."

"Not to say that he may be unable himself to get there," said Martin. As he spoke, they had reached the door, opening which with his key, the captain motioned to Massingbred to enter.

Massingbred stopped suddenly, and in a voice of deep meaning said, "Your father lives here?"

"Yes—what then?" asked Martin.

"Only that I have no right to pass his threshold," said the other, in a low voice. "I was his guest once, and I'm not sure that I repaid the hospitality as became me. You were away at the time."

"You allude to that stupid election affair," said Martin. "I can only say, that I never did, never could, understand it. My only feeling was one of gratitude to you for saving me from being Member for the borough. Come along," said he, taking his arm; "this is no time for your scruples, at all events."

"No, Martin, I cannot," said the other. "I'd rather walk up to one of those nine-pounders there, than present myself to your lady-mother——"

"But you needn't. You are *my* guest—these are *my* quarters. You shall see nobody but myself till you leave this. Remember what the captain told us; we are prisoners here." And without waiting for a reply, Martin pushed him before him into the room.

"Two o'clock," said Massingbred, looking at his watch, "and we are to be at Versailles by eight!"

"Well, leave all the care of that to me," said Martin, "and do you throw yourself on the bed there, and take some rest. Without you prefer to sup first?"

"No, an hour's sleep is what I stand most in need of; and so I'll say good night."

Massingbred said this, less that he wanted repose, than a brief interval to be alone with his own thoughts. And now, as he closed his eyes to affect sleep, it was really to commune with his own heart, and reflect over what had just occurred.

Independently that he liked Czernavitz personally, he was sorry for a quarrel at such a moment. There was a great game about to be played, and a mere personal altercation seemed something small and contemptible in the face of such events. "What will be said of us," thought he, "but that we were a pair of hot headed fools, thinking more of a miserable interchange of weak sarcasms than of the high destinies of a whole nation. And it was *my* fault," added he to himself, "I had no right to reproach him with a calamity hard enough to bear, even without its being a reproach. What a strange thing is life, after all," thought he; "everything of greatest moment that occurs in it the upshot of an accident—my going to Ireland—my visit to the west—my election—my meeting with Kate Henderson — and now this duel." And, so ruminating, he dropped off into a sound sleep, undisturbed by sounds that might well have broken the heaviest slumber.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN EVENING OF ONE OF THE "THREE DAYS."

On the evening which witnessed these events, Lady Dorothea's "reception" had been more than usually brilliant. Numbers had come to show of how little moment they deemed this "street disturbance," as they were pleased to call it; others, again, were curious to pick up in society the opinions formed on what was passing, among whom were several high in the favour of the Court and the confidence of the Government. All, as they arrived, had some little anecdote or adventure to relate as to the difficulties which beset them on the way—the distances which they were obliged to travel—the obstructions, and pass-words, and explanations which met them at every turn. These were all narrated in the easy, jocular tone of passing trifles, the very inconvenience of which suggested its share of amusement.

As the evening wore on, even these became less frequent, the streets were already thinning, and, except in some remote, unimportant parts of the capital, the troops were in possession of all the thoroughfares. Of course, the great topic of conversation was the bold stroke of policy then enacting—a measure which all pronounced wise and just, and eminently called for.

To have heard the sentiments then uttered, the disparaging opinions expressed of the middle and humbler classes, the hopelessness of ever seeing them sufficiently impressed with their own inferiority, the adulation bestowed on the monarch and all around him, one might really have fancied himself back again at the Tuileries in the time of Louis the Fourteenth. All agreed in deeming the occasion an excellent one to give the people a salutary lesson; and it was really pleasant to see the warm interest taken by these high and distinguished persons in the fortunes of their less happy countrymen.

To Lady Dorothea's ears no theme could be more grateful, and she moved from group to group, delighted to mingle her congratulations with those around, and exchange her hopes, and aspirations, and wishes with theirs. Kate Henderson, upon whom habitually devolved the chief part in these "receptions," was excited and flurried in manner; a more than ordinary effort to please being dashed, as it were, by some secret anxiety, and the expectation of some coming event. Had there been any one to watch her movements, he might have seen the eagerness with which she listened to each new account of the state of the capital, and how impatiently she drank in the last tidings from the streets; nor less marked was the expression of proud scorn upon her features, as she heard the insulting estimate of the populace, and the vainglorious confidence in the soldiery. But more than all these was her haughty indignation as she listened to the confused, mistaken opinions uttered on every side as to the policy of the Government and the benevolent intentions of the King. Once, and only once, did she forget the prudent resolve she wished to impose upon herself; but temper, and caution, and reserve gave way, as she heard a very distinguished person amusing a circle around him by an unfair and and unfaithful portraiture of the great leaders of '92. It was then, when stung by the odious epithet of "canaille," applied to those for whose characters she entertained a deep devotion, that she forgot everything, and in a burst of indignant eloquence, overwhelmed and refuted the speaker. This was the moment, too, in which she replied to Villemart by a word of terrible ferocity. Had the red cap of Liberty itself been suddenly hoisted in that brilliant assemblage, the dread and terror which arose could scarcely have been greater.

"Where are we?" cried the Marquise de Longueville. "I thought we were in the Place de Vendôme, and I find myself in the Faubourg St. Antoine!"

"Does my lady know that her friend and confidante is a Girondist of the first water?" said an ex-Minister.

"Who could have suspected the spirit of Marat under the mask of Ninon de l'Enclos?" muttered Villemart.

"What is this I hear, dearest Kate?" cried the Duchesse de Mirecourt, as she drew the young girl's arm within her own. "They tell me you have terrified every one—that Madame de

Soissons has gone home ill, and the old Chevalier de Gardonnes has sent for his confessor."

"I have been very rash—very foolish," said Kate, as a deadly pallor came over her; "but I could bear it no longer. Besides, what does it matter? They'll hear worse, and bear it too, before three days are over."

"Then it is all true?" cried the duchesse, eagerly. "You told Villemart, that when the Government spoke with grapeshot, the people replied with the guillotine!"

"Not exactly," said Kate, with a faint smile. "But are they all going?"

"Of course they are. You have frightened them almost to death, and I know you only meant it for jest—one of those little half-cruel jests you were ever fond of. Come with me and say so—come, dearest." And she drew her, as she spoke, into the crowded salon, now already a scene of excited leave-taking. The brilliant company, however, fell back as they came forward, and an expression of mingled dismay and compassion was turned towards the young duchess, who with a kind of heroic courage drew Kate's arm closer within her own.

"I am come to make an explanation, Messieurs et Mesdames," said the duchesse, with her most captivating smile; "pray vouchsafe me a hearing. My friend—my dearest, best friend here—has, in a moment of sportive pleasantry, suffered herself to jest——"

"It was a jest, then?" broke in Madame de Longueville, haughtily.

"Just as that is," replied Kate, lifting her hand and pointing in the direction whence came a terrible crash of artillery, followed by the rattle of musketry.

"Let us go—let us away!" was now heard in affrighted accents on every side; and the splendid assemblage, with less of ceremony than might be expected, began to depart. Lady Dorothea alone was ignorant of what had occurred, and witnessed this sudden leave-taking with amazement. "You are surely not afraid?" said she to one; "there is nothing serious in all this."

"She has told us the reverse, my lady," was the reply. "We should be compromised to remain longer in her company."

"Adieu, my lady. I wish we left you in safer companionship."

"Farewell, madame, and pray be warned of your danger," whispered another.

"Your ladyship may be called upon to acquit debts contracted by another, if mademoiselle continues a member of your family," said Villemart, as he bowed his departure.

"Believe me, madame, none of us include *you* in the terrible sentiments we have listened to."

These, and a vast number of similar speeches, attended the leave-taking of nearly each of her guests, till Lady Dorothea, confused, almost stunned by reiterated shocks, sat silently accepting these mysterious announcements, and almost imagining herself in all the bewilderment of a dream.

Twice she made an effort to ask some explanation, but failed, and it was only as the Duchesse de Mirecourt drew nigh to say farewell, that in a faint, weak voice she said:

"Can you tell me what all are hinting at? or am I only confusing myself with the terrible scenes without?"

"I'd have prevented it, had I been near. I only heard it when too late, my lady," said the duchesse, sorrowfully.

"Prevented what?—heard what?" cried Lady Dorothea.

"Besides, she has often said as much amongst ourselves; we only laughed, as indeed every one would do now, did not events present so formidable an aspect."

"Who is she you speak of? Tell me, I beseech you. What does this mean?"

"I am the culprit, my lady," said Kate, approaching with all the quiet stateliness of her peculiar manner. "I have routed this gorgeous assembly—shocked your most distinguished guests—and horrified all whose sentiments breathe loyalty! I am sincerely sorry for my offence, and it is a grave one."

"*You—you* have dared to do this?"

"Too true, madam," rejoined Kate.

"How and to whom have you had the insolence——"

She stopped, overcome by passion, and Kate replied:

"To all who pleased to listen, my lady, I have said what doubtless is not often uttered in such choice company, but what, if I mistake not greatly, their ears will grow familiar with ere long."

"Nay, nay," said the duchesse, in a tone of apology, "the matter is not so serious as all this. Every one now is terrified. This disturbance—the soldiery—the vast crowds that beset the streets, have all produced so much excitement, that even a few words spoken at random are enough to cause fear. It is one of Kate's fancies to terrorise thus over weak minds. She has the cruel triumph of not knowing what fear is. In a word, it is a mere trifling event, sure to be forgotten in the midst of such scenes as we are passing through."

This attempt at explanation, poured forth with rapid utterance, did not produce on Lady Dorothea the conviction it was intended to impose, and her ladyship received the last adieux of the duchess with a cold and stately formality; and then, as the door closed after her, turned to Kate Henderson, and said:

"I want *your* explanation of all this. Let me have it."

"It is easily given, my lady," said Kate calmly. And then, in a voice that never trembled nor varied, she narrated briefly the scene which had just occurred, not extenuating in the slightest her own share in the transaction, or offering a single syllable of excuse.

"And you, being who and what you are, dared thus to outrage the best blood of France!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea, trembling all over with passion.

"Perhaps, my lady, if I sought for an apology, it would be in the fact of being who and what I am."

"And do you imagine, that after conduct such as this—after exposing *me* to a partnership in the shame that attaches to yourself, that you are any longer to enjoy the shelter of my roof?"

"It never occurred to me to think of that, madam," said Kate, with an ill-repressed scorn.

"Then it is for *me* to remind you of it," said her ladyship, sternly. "You shall, first of all, write me an humble apology for this vulgar tirade—this outrage upon my company, and then you shall leave the house. Sit down there, and write as I shall dictate to you."

Kate seated herself with an air of implicit obedience at a writing-table, and took up a pen.

"Write," cried Lady Dorothea, sternly. "Begin, 'My Lady.' No. 'I approach your ladyship for the last time.' No, not that. 'If the sincere sorrow in which I pen these lines.' No. Do it yourself. You best can express the shame your heart should feel in such a moment. Let the words be your own!"

Kate leaned over the paper and wrote rapidly for a few seconds. Having finished, she read over the lines, and seemed to reflect on them.

"Show me that paper!" cried Lady Dorothea, impatiently. But, without obeying the command, Kate said:

"Your ladyship will not be able to leave Paris for at least forty hours. By that time the Monarchy will have run its course in France. You will probably desire, however, to escape from the scenes of turbulence sure to ensue. This will secure you a free passage, whichever road you take."

"What raving is all this?" said Lady Dorothea, snatching the paper from her hand, and then reading aloud in French:

"'The authorities are required to aid and tender all assistance in their power to Lady Dorothea Martin and all who accompany her, neither giving nor suffering any opposition to be given to her or them in the prosecution of their journey.

(Signed) "'JULES LAGRANGE,
"'Minister of Police, *ad. interim.*'

"And this in your own hand, too!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea, contemptuously.

"Yes, madam; but it will entitle it to the seal of the Préfecture, and entitle *you* to all that it professes."

"So that I have the honour to shelter within my walls a chief of this insurrection—if it be worthy of such a name—one in the confidence of this stupid canaille, who fancy that the fall of a Monarchy is like a row in a guinguette!"

"Your ladyship is no longer in a position to question me or arraign my actions. Before two days are over, the pageant of a King will have passed off the stage, and men of a different stamp take the direction of affairs. One of these will be he whose name I have affixed to that paper—not without due warranty to do so. Your ladyship may or may not choose to avail yourself of it."

"I spurn the imposition," said Lady Dorothea, tearing it in fragments. "So poor a cheat could not deceive *me*. As for yourself——"

"Oh, do not bestow a thought upon *me*, my lady. I can suffice for my own guidance. I only wait for morning to leave this house."

"And it is to a city in such a state as this you would confide yourself. Truly, mademoiselle, Republicanism has a right to be proud of you. You are no half-convert to its principles."

"Am I again to say, my lady, that your control over me has ceased?"

"It has not. It shall not cease till I have restored you to the humble roof from which I took you," said Lady Dorothea, passionately. "Your father is our creature; he has no other subsistence than what we condescend to bestow on him. He shall know, when you re-enter his doors, why, and for what cause, you are there. Till that time come, you are, as you have been, in my service."

"No, my lady, the tie between us is snapped. Dependence is but a sad part at the best; but so long as it is coupled with a certain show of respect, it is bearable. Destroy *that*, and it is mere slavery, abject and degrading. I cannot go back to your ladyship's service." And she gave to the last word an emphasis of intense scorn.

"You must, and you shall," said Lady Dorothea. "If *you* are forgetful of what it is your duty to remember, *I* am not. Here you shall remain; without," added she, in an accent of supreme contempt, "your counsel and direction shall be sought after by the high and mighty individuals who are so soon to administer the affairs of this nation."

The loud roll of a drum, followed by the louder clank of sabres and musketry, here startled the speakers, and Kate, hastening to the window, opened it, and stepped out upon the balcony. Day was just dawning; a grey half-light covered the sky, but the dark shadows of the tall houses still stretched over the Place. Here, now, the troops were all in motion, a sudden summons having roused them to form in rank. The hasty character of the movement showed that some emergency was imminent; a fact confirmed by the frequent arrival and departure of orderlies at full speed.

After a brief interval of preparation the infantry formed in column, and, followed by the artillery and cavalry, moved out of the Place at a quick step. The measured tramp of the foot soldiers, the clattering noise of the train and the dragoons, could be heard long after they had passed out of sight; and Kate stood listening eagerly as to what would come next, when suddenly a man in plain clothes rode hastily from one of the side-streets into the centre of the Place. He looked around him for a moment or two, and then disappeared. Within a few seconds after, a dull, indistinct sound seemed to rise from the ground, which swelled gradually louder and louder, and at last grew into the regular footfall of a great multitude moving in measured time, and now, a vast crowd poured into the Place—silent and wordless. On they came from the various quarters that opened into the square—men, for the most part clad in blouses, or in the coarse garb of labourers. They were armed either with musket or sword, and in many instances wore the cross-belt of the soldier. They proceeded at once to barricade the square at its opening into the Rue de la Paix—a work which they accomplished with astonishing speed and regularity, for, while Kate still looked, a formidable rampart was thrown up across the entire street, along which a line of armed men was stationed, every one of whom, by his attitude and gesture, betrayed the old discipline of a soldier's life. Orders were given and obeyed, movements made, and dispositions effected, with all the regularity and precision of regular troops; and, by the ready obedience of all, and the steady attitude observed, it was easy to see that these men were trained to arms and to habits of discipline. Not less evident was it that they who commanded them were not new to such duties. But, more important than all such signs, was the fact, that here and there through the mass might be seen the uniform of a soldier, or the epaulette of an officer, showing that desertion to the ranks of the people had already begun.

Kate was so occupied in attentive observation of the scene, that she had not noticed the arrival of another person in the apartment, and whose voice now suddenly attracted her. It was Martin himself, hastily aroused from his bed by his servant, who in great alarm told him that the capital was in open revolt, the King's troops beaten back, and the people victorious everywhere. "There's not a moment to lose," cried he; "we must escape while we can. The road to Versailles is yet in possession of the troops, and we can take that way."

Lady Dorothea, partly overcome by the late scene, partly stunned by the repeated shocks she experienced, made no reply whatever, and Martin, judging from the expression of her features the anxiety she was suffering, hastily added, "Let me see Kate Henderson—where is she?"

Lady Dorothea merely pointed towards the balcony, but did not utter a word.

"Oh, have I found you," said Martin, stepping out upon the balcony. "You see what is doing—I might say what is done," added he, "for I believe the game is well-nigh decided. Nothing but an overwhelming force will now crush this populace. We must get away, and at once. Will you give the orders? Send for post-horses—tell them to pack up whatever they can—direct everything, in fact. My lady is too ill—too much overcome to act, or think of anything. Our whole reliance is upon you." While he was yet uttering these broken, disjointed sentences, he had drawn Kate by the arm within the room, and now stood beside Lady Dorothea's chair. Her ladyship raised her head and fixed her eyes upon Kate, who sustained the gaze calmly and steadily, nor by the slightest movement displayed one touch of any emotion. The glance, at first haughty and defiant, seemed at length to grow weaker under the unmoved stare of the young girl, and finally she bent down her head and sat as though overcome.

"Come, Dora," said Martin, kindly, "rouse yourself; you are always equal to an effort when necessity presses. Tell Kate here what you wish, and she'll do it."

"I want no aid—no assistance, sir. Miss Henderson is her own mistress—she may do what, or go where, she pleases."

Martin made a sign to Kate not to mind what he believed to be the mere wandering of an overexcited brain, and then bending down over the chair, said, "Dear Dora, we must be active and stirring; the people will soon be masters of the capital—for a while, at least—and there is no saying what excesses they will commit."

"Do not offend Miss Henderson, sir," interposed Lady Dorothea; "she has equal confidence in their valour and their virtue."

"What does this mean?—when did she fall into this state?" asked he, eagerly. And although only spoken in a whisper, Lady Dorothea overheard them, and said:

"Let *her* tell you. She can give you the very fullest explanation."

"But, Dora, this is no time for trifling; we are here, in the midst of an enraged populace and a maddened soldiery. There, listen!—that was artillery; and now, hear!—the bells of the churches are sounding the alarm."

"They are ringing the knell of the Monarchy!" said Kate, solemnly.

A hoarse wild shout—a cry like that of enraged wild beasts, arose from the Place beneath, and all rushed to the window to see what had occurred. It was a charge of heavy cavalry endeavouring to force the barricade, and now, vigorously repulsed by the defenders, men and horses were rolling on the ground in terrible confusion, while on the barricade itself a hand-to-hand conflict was raging.

"Sharp work, by George!" said a voice behind Kate's shoulder. She turned and saw Captain Martin, who had just joined them unobserved.

"I thought you many a mile away," said Kate, in a whisper.

"So I should have been," replied he, in the same tone, "but I wasn't going to lose this. I knew it was to come off to-day, and I thought it would have been a thousand pities to be absent."

"And are your wishes, then, with these gallant fellows?" said she, eagerly. "Do I hear you aright, that it was to aid them you remained? There! see how they bear down on the soldiery; they will not be restrained; they are crossing the barricade, and charging with the bayonet. It is only for liberty that men can fight thus. Oh, that I were a man, to be amongst them!"

A stray shot from beneath here struck the architrave above their heads, and sent down a mass of plaster over them.

"Come, Dora, this is needless peril," said Martin, drawing her within the room. "If you will not leave this, at least do not expose yourself unnecessarily."

"But it is exactly to get away—to escape while there is time—that I came for," said the captain. "They tell me that the mob are getting the best of it, and, worse again, that the troops are joining them; so, to make sure, I've sent off Fenton to the post for horses, and I'm expecting him every moment. But here he is. Well, have you got the horses?"

"No, sir; the horses have all been taken by the people to mount orderlies; the postmaster, too, has fled, and everything is in confusion. But if we had horses the streets are impassable; from here to the Boulevard there are no less than five barricades."

"Then what is to be done?" cried Martin.

"They say, sir," replied Fenton, "that by gaining the outer Boulevard on foot, carriages and horses are easily found there, to reach Belleville, St. Germain, or Versailles."

"He is right," said the captain; "there is nothing else to be done. What do *you* think?" said he, addressing Kate, who stood intently watching the movements in the "Place" beneath.

"Yes; do you agree with this plan?" asked Martin, approaching her.

"Look!" cried she, eagerly, and not heeding the question, "the troops are rapidly joining the people—they come in numbers now—and yonder is an officer in his uniform."

"Shame on him!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea, indignantly.

"So say I, too," said Kate. "He who wears a livery should not assume the port and bearing of a free man. This struggle is for Liberty, and should only be maintained by the Free!"

"How are we to pass these barricades?" cried Martin, anxiously.

"I will be your guide, sir, if that be all," said Kate. "You may trust me. I promise no more than I can perform."

"She speaks truly," said Lady Dorothea. "Alas, that we should see the day when we cannot reject the aid!"

"There is a matter I want to speak to you about," said Martin, drawing his father aside, and speaking in a low, confidential tone. "Massingbred—Jack Massingbred—is now here, in my room. I know all about my mother's dislike to him, and *he* knows it; indeed, he has as much as owned to me that he deserved it all. But what is to be done? We cannot leave him here."

"How came he to be here?" asked Martin.

"He accompanied me from the Club, where, in an altercation of some sort, he had just involved himself in a serious quarrel. He came here to be ready to start this morning for Versailles, where the meeting was to take place; but indeed he had no thought of accepting shelter under our roof; and when he found where he was, it was with the greatest difficulty I could persuade him to enter. None of us anticipated such a serious turn of affairs as this; and now, of course, a meeting will be scarcely possible. What are we to do with him?"

"Ask him frankly to join us if we obtain the horses."

"But my mother?"

"I'll speak to her—but it were better you did it, Harry. These are not times to weigh scruples and balance difficulties. I don't myself think that Massingbred treated us fairly, but it is not now I'd like to remember it. There, go; tell her what you have told me, and all will be well."

The captain drew nigh Lady Dorothea, and, leaning over her chair, whispered to her for some minutes. At first, a slight gesture of impatience burst from her, but afterwards she seemed to hear him calmly and tranquilly.

"It would seem as though the humiliations of this night are never to have an end," said she, with a sigh. "But I'll bear my share of them."

"Remember," said the other, "that it was by no choice of *his* he came here. His foot was on the threshold before he suspected it."

"Miss Henderson sent me, my lady," said a servant, entering hastily, "to say that there is not a minute to be lost. They are expecting an attack on the barricade in the Rue de la Paix, and we ought to pass through at once."

"By whose orders?" began she, haughtily; then, checking herself suddenly, and in a voice weak and broken, added, "I am ready. Give me your arm, Harry, and do not leave me. Where is Mr. Martin?" asked she.

"He is waiting for your ladyship at the foot of the stairs with another gentleman," said the servant.

"That must be Massingbred, for I told them to call him," said the captain.

When Lady Dorothea, supported by the arm of her son, had reached the gate, she found Martin and Massingbred standing to receive them, surrounded by a numerous escort of servants, each loaded with some portion of the family baggage.

"A hasty summons, sir," said she, addressing Massingbred, and thus abruptly avoiding the awkwardness of a more ceremonious meeting. "A few hours back none of us anticipated anything like this. Will it end seriously, think you?"

"There is every prospect of such, madam," said he, bowing respectfully to her salutation. "Every moment brings fresh tidings of defection among the troops, while the Marshal is paralysed by contradictory orders."

"Is it always to be the fate of Monarchy to be badly served in times of peril?" said she, bitterly.

"It is very difficult to awaken loyalty against one's convictions of right, madam. I mean," added he, as a gesture of impatience broke from her, "that these acts of the King, having no support from his real friends, are weak stimulants to evoke deeds of daring and courage."

"They are unworthy supporters of a Crown who only defend what they approve of. This is but Democracy at best, and smacks of the policy which has little to lose and everything to gain by times of trouble."

"And yet, madam, such cannot be the case here; at least, it is assuredly not so in the instance of him who is now speaking with Miss Henderson." And he pointed to a man who, holding the bridle of his horse on his arm, walked slowly at Kate's side in the street before the door.

"And who is he?" asked she, eagerly.

"The greatest banker in Paris, madam—one of the richest capitalists of Europe—ready to resign all his fortune in the struggle against a rule which he foresees intended to bring back the days of a worn-out, effete Monarchy, rather than a system which shall invigorate the nation, and enrich it by the arts of commerce and trade."

"But his name—who is he?" asked she, more impatiently.

"Charles Lagrange, madam."

"I have heard the name before. I have seen it somewhere lately," said she, trying to remember where and how.

"You could scarcely have paid your respects at Neuilly, madam, without seeing him. He was, besides, the favoured guests at Madame de Mirecourt's."

"You would not imply, sir, that the duchess condescended to any sympathy with this party?"

"More than half the Court, madam, are against the Crown; I will not say, however, that they are, on that account, for the people."

"There! she is making a sign to us to follow her," said Martin, pointing towards Kate, who, still conversing with her companion, motioned to the others to come up.

"It is from that quarter we receive our orders," said Lady Dorothea, sneeringly, as she prepared to follow.

"What has she to do with it?" exclaimed the captain. "To look at her, one would say she was deep in the whole business."

A second gesture, more urgent than before, now summoned the party to make haste.

Through the "Place," crowded as it was by an armed and excited multitude, way was rapidly made for the little party who now issued from the door of the hotel. Kate Henderson walked in front, with Massingbred at her side, talking eagerly, and by his gestures seeming as though endeavouring to extenuate or explain away something in his conduct; next, came Lady Dorothea, supported between her husband and her son, and while walking slowly, and with faltering steps, still carrying her head proudly erect, and gazing on the stern faces around her with looks of haughty contempt. After them were a numerous retinue of servants, with such effects as they had got hurriedly together—a terror-struck set, scarcely able to crawl along from fear.

As they drew nigh the barricade, some men proceeded to remove a heavy wagon which adjoined a house, and by the speed and activity of their movements, urged on as they were by the orders of one in command, it might be seen that the operation demanded promptitude.

"We are scarcely safe in this," cried the officer. "See!

they are making signs to us from the windows—the troops are coming. If you pass out now, you will be between two fires."

"There is yet time," said Kate, eagerly. "Our presence in the street, too, will delay them, and give you some minutes to prepare. And as for ourselves, we shall gain one of the side-streets easily enough."

"Tie your handkerchief to your cane, sir," said the officer to Massingbred.

"My flag is ready," said Jack, gaily; "I only hope they may respect it."

"Now—now!" cried Kate with eagerness, and beckoning to Lady Dorothea to hasten, "the passage is free, and not a second to be lost!"

"Are you not coming with us?" whispered Martin to her, as they passed out.

"Yes; I'll follow. But," added she, in a lower tone, "were the choice given me, it is here I'd take my stand."

She looked full at Massingbred as she spoke, and, bending down his head, he said, "Had it been your place, it were mine also!"

"Quick—quick, my lady," said Kate. "They must close up the passage at once. They are expecting an attack." And so saying, she motioned rapidly to Martin to move on.

"The woman is a fiend," said Lady Dorothea; "see how her eyes sparkle, and mark the wild exultation of her features."

"Adieu, sir—adieu!" said Kate, waving her hand to one who seemed the chief of the party. "All my wishes are with you. Were I a man, my hand should guarantee my heart."

"Come—come back!" cried the officer. "You are too late. There comes the head of the column."

"No, never—never!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea, haughtily; "protection from such as these is worse than any death."

"Give me the flag, then," cried Kate, snatching it from Massingbred's hand, and hastening on before the others. And now the heavy wagon had fallen back to its place, and a serried file of muskets peeped over it.

"Where's Massingbred?" asked the captain, eagerly.

"Yonder—where he ought to be!" exclaimed Kate, proudly, pointing to the barricade, upon which, now, Jack was standing conspicuously, a musket on his arm.

The troops in front were not the head of a column, but the advanced guard of a force evidently at some distance off, and instead of advancing on the barricade, they drew up and halted in triple file across the street. Their attitude of silent, stern defiance—for it was such—evoked a wild burst of popular fury, and epithets of abuse and insult were heaped upon them from windows and parapets.

"They are the famous Twenty-Second of the Line," said the captain, "who forced the Pont-Neuf yesterday, and drove the mob before them."

"It is fortunate for us that we fall into such hands," said Lady Dorothea, waving her handkerchief as she advanced. But Kate had already approached the line, and now halted at a command from the officer. While she endeavoured to explain how and why they were there, the cries and menaces of the populace grew louder and wilder. The officer, a very young subaltern, seemed confused and flurried; his eyes turned constantly towards the street from which they had advanced, and he seemed anxiously expecting the arrival of the regiment.

"I cannot give you a convoy, mademoiselle," he said; "I scarcely know if I have the right to let you pass. We may be attacked at any moment; for aught I can tell, *you* may be in the interests of the insurgents——"

"We are cut off, lieutenant," cried a sergeant, running up at the moment; "they have thrown up a barrier behind us, and it is armed already."

"Lay down your arms, then," said Kate, "and do not sacrifice your brave fellows in a hopeless struggle."

"Listen not to *her*, young man, but give heed to your honour and your loyalty," cried Lady Dorothea. "Is it against such an enemy as this French soldiers fear to advance?"

"Forward!" cried the officer, waving his sword above his head. "Let us carry the barricade!" And a wild yell of defiance from the windows repeated the speech in derision.

"You are going to certain death!" cried Kate, throwing herself before him. "Let *me* make terms for you, and they shall not bring dishonour on you."

"Here comes the regiment!" called out the sergeant. "They have forced the barricade." And the quick tramp of a column, as they came at a run, now shook the street.

"Remember your cause and your King, sir," cried Lady Dorothea to the officer.

"Bethink you of your country—of France—and of Liberty!" said Kate, as she grasped his arm.

"Stand back!—back to the houses!" said he, waving his sword. "Voltigeurs, to the front!"

The command was scarcely issued, when a hail of balls rattled through the air. The defenders of the barricade had opened their fire, and with a deadly precision, too, for several fell at the very first discharge.

"Back to the houses!" exclaimed Martin, dragging Lady Dorothea along, who, in her eagerness, now forgot all personal danger, and only thought of the contest before her.

"Get under cover of the troops—to the rear!" cried the captain, as he endeavoured to bear her away.

"Back—back—beneath the archway!" cried Kate, as, throwing her arms around Lady Dorothea, she lifted her fairly from the ground, and carried her within the deep recess of a porte cochère. Scarcely, however, had she deposited her in safety, than she fell tottering backwards, and sank to the ground.

"Good Heavens! she is struck," exclaimed Martin, bending over her.

"It is nothing—a spent shot, and no more," said Kate, as she showed the bullet, which had perforated her dress beneath the arm.

"A good soldier, by Jove!" said the captain, gazing with real admiration on the beautiful features before him, the faint smile she wore heightening their loveliness, and contrasting happily with their pallor.

"There they go—they are up the barricade already—they are over it—through it!" cried the captain. "Gallantly done!—gloriously done! No, by Jove! they are falling back—the fire is murderous. See how they bayonet them. The troops must win. They move together—they are like a wall! In vain, in vain—they cannot do it! They are beaten—they are lost!"

"Who are lost?" said Kate, in a half fainting voice.

"The soldiers. And there's Massingbred on the top of the barricade, in the midst of it all. I see his hat. They are driven back—beaten—beaten!"

"Come in, quickly," cried a voice from behind; and a small portion of the door was opened to admit them. "The soldiers are retiring, and will kill all before them."

"Let *me* aid you; it is *my* turn now," said Lady Dorothea, assisting Kate to rise. "Good Heavens! her arm is broken—it is smashed in two." And she caught the fainting girl in her arms.

Gathering around, they bore her within the gate, and had but time to bar and bolt it, when the hurried tramp without, and the wild yell of popular triumph, told that the soldiers were retreating, beaten and defeated.

"And this to save me!" said Lady Dorothea, as she stooped over her. And the scalding tears dropped one by one on Kate's cheek.

"Tear this handkerchief, and bind it around my arm," said Kate, calmly; "the pain is not very great, and there will be no bleeding, the doctors say, from a gun-shot wound."

"I'll be the surgeon," said the captain, addressing himself to the task with more of skill than might be expected. "I've seen many a fellow struck down who didn't bear it as calmly," muttered he, as he bent over her. "Am I giving you any pain?"

"Not in the least: and if I were in torture, that glorious cheer outside would rally me. Hear!—listen!—the soldiers are in full retreat—the people, the noble-hearted people, are the conquerors!"

"Be calm, and think of yourself," said Lady Dorothea, mildly, to her; "such excitement may peril your very life."

"And it is worth a thousand lives to taste of it," said she, while her cheek flushed, and her dark eyes gleamed with added lustre.

"The street is clear now," said one of the servants to Martin, "and we might reach the Boulevard with ease."

"Let us go, then," said Lady Dorothea. "Let us look to *her*, and think of nothing till she be cared for."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SOME CONFESSIONS OF JACK MASSINGBRED.

Upon two several occasions have we committed to Jack Massingbred the task of conducting this truthful history—for the third time do we now purpose to make his correspondence the link between the past and what is to follow. We are not quite sure that the course we thus adopt is free from its share of inconvenience, but we take it to avoid the evils of reiteration inseparable from following out the same events from merely different points of view. There is also another advantage to be gained. Jack is before our readers, we are not; Jack is an acquaintance, we cannot aspire to that honour; Jack's opinions, right or wrong as they may be, are part and parcel of a character already awaiting their verdict. What he thought and felt, hoped, feared, or wished, are the materials by which he is to be judged; and so we leave his cause in his own hands.

His letter is addressed to the same correspondent to whom he wrote before. It is written, too, at different intervals, and in different moods of mind. Like the letters of many men who practise concealment with the world at large, it is remarkable for great frankness and sincerity. He throws away his mask with such evident signs of enjoyment, that we only wonder if he can ever resume it; but crafty men like to relax into candour, as royalty is said to indulge with pleasure in the chance moments of pretended equality. It is, at all events, a novel sensation, and even that much, in this routine life of ours, is something!

He writes from Spa, and after some replies to matters with which we have no concern, proceeds thus:

"Of the Revolution, then, and the Three Glorious Days as they are called, I can tell you next to nothing, and for this simple reason, that I was there fighting, shouting, throwing up barricades, singing the *Marseillaise*, smashing furniture, and shooting my 'Swiss,' like the rest. As to who beat the troops, forced the Tuileries, and drove Marmont back, you must consult the newspapers. Personal adventures I could give you to satiety, hair-breadth 'scapes and acts of heroism by the dozen; but these narratives are never new, and always tiresome. The serious reflectiveness sounds like humbug, and, if one treats them lightly, the flippancy is an offence. Jocular heroism is ever an insult to the reader.

"You say 'Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?' and I answer, it was all *her* doing. Yes, Harry *she* was there. I was thinking of nothing less in the world than a great 'blow for freedom,' as the *Globe* has it. I had troubled my head wonderfully little about the whole affair. Any little interest I took was in the notion that if our 'natural enemies,' the French, were to fall to and kill each other, there would be so much the fewer left to fight against us; but as to who was to get the upper hand, or what they were to do when they had it, I gave myself no imaginable concern. I had a vague, shadowy kind of impression that the government was a bad one, but I had a much stronger conviction that the people deserved no better. My leanings—my instincts, if you prefer it—were with the Crown. The mob and its sentiments are always repulsive. Popular enthusiasm is a great ocean, but it is an ocean of dirty water, and you cannot come out clean from the contact; and so, I should have wished well to royalty, but for an accident—a mere trifle in its way—but one quite sufficient, even on historic grounds, to account for a man's change of opinions. The troops shot my cab-horse, sent a bullet through poor 'Beverley,' and seriously damaged a new hat which I wore at the time, accompanying these acts with expressions the reverse of compliment or civility. I was pitched out into the gutter, and, most appropriately you will say, I got up a Radical, a Democrat, a Fourierist—anything, in short, that shouts 'Down with Kings, and up with the Sovereign People!'

"My principles—don't smile at the word—led me into a stupid altercation with a very pleasant acquaintance, and we parted to meet the next morning in hostility, at least, such was our understanding; but, by the time that our difference should have been settled, *I* was carried away on a stretcher to the

Hôtel-Dieu, wounded, and *he* was flung, a corpse, into the Seine. I intended to have been a most accurate narrator of events, journalising for you, hour by hour, with all the stirring excitement of the present tense, but I cannot; the crash and the hubbub are still in my brain, and the infernal chaos of the streets is yet over me. Not to speak of my wound—a very ugly sabre-cut in the neck—severing I don't know what amount of nerves, arteries, and such like 'small deer,' every one of which, however, has its own peculiar perils in the shape of aneurisms, tetanus, and so forth, in case I am not a miracle of patience, calmness, and composure.

"The Martins are nursing, and comforting, and chicken-brothing me to my heart's content, and La Henderson, herself an invalid, with a terrible broken arm, comes and reads to me from time to time. What a girl it is! Wounded in a street encounter, she actually carried Lady Dorothea into a porte-cochère, and when they had lost their heads in terror, could neither issue an order to the servants nor know what way to turn, she took the guidance of the whole party, obtained horses and carriages and an escort, escaped from Paris, and reached Versailles in the midst of flying courtiers and dismayed ministers, and actually was the very first to bring the tidings that the game of Monarchy was up—that the King had nothing left for it but an inglorious flight. To the Duchesse de Mirecourt she made this communication, which it seems none of the court-followers had the courage or honesty to do before. The duchess, in her terror, actually dragged her into the presence of the king, and made her repeat what she had said. The scene, as told me, was quite dramatic; the king took her hand to lead her to a seat, but it was unfortunately of the wounded arm, and she fainted. The sight of the wounded limb so affected the nerves of monarchy, that he gave immediate orders to depart, and was off within an hour.

"How they found me out a patient in a ward of the Hôtel-Dieu, rescued and carried me away with them, I have heard full half-a-dozen times, but I'm far from being clear enough to repeat the story; and, indeed, when I try to recall the period, the only images which rise up before me are long ranges of white coverlids, pale faces, and groans and cries of suffering, with the dark curly head of a great master of torture peeping at me, and whom, I am told, is the Baron Dupuytren, the Surgeon-in-Chief. After these comes a vision of litters and *charrettes*—sore joltings and stoppages to drink water——But

I shall rave if I go on. Better I should tell you of my pleasant little bedroom here, opening on a small garden, with a tiny fountain, trying to sprinkle the wild myrtle and blush-roses around it, and sportively sending its little plash over me, as the wind wafts it into my chamber. My luxurious chair and easy-cushioned sofa, and my table littered with everything, from flowers to French romances; not to speak of the small rustic seat beside the window, where *she* has been sitting the last hour, and has only quitted to give me time to write this to you. I know it—I see it—all you can say, all that you are saying at this moment, is fifty times more forcibly echoing within my own heart, and repeating in fitful sentences: 'A ruined man—a broken fortune—a mad attachment—a life of struggle, difficulty, and failure!' But why should it be failure? Such a girl for a wife ought in itself to be an earnest of success. Are not her qualities exactly those that do battle with the difficulties of fortune? Self-denial—ambition—courage—an intense, an intuitive knowledge of the world—and then, a purpose-like devotion to whatever she undertakes, that throws an air of heroism over all her actions.

"Birth—blood—family connexions—what have they done for me, except it be to entail upon me the necessity of selecting a career amidst the two or three that are supposed to suit the well-born? I may be a Life Guardsman, or an unpaid Attaché, but I must not be a physician or a merchant! Nor is it alone that certain careers are closed against us, but certain opinions too. I must not think ill of the governing class—I must never think well of the governed.

"Well, Harry, the colonies are the remedy for all this. There, at least, a man can fashion existence as arbitrarily as he can the shape and size of his house. None shall dictate his etiquette, no more than his architecture, and I am well weary of the slavery of this old-world life, with our worship of old notions and old china, both, because they are cracked, damaged, and useless. I'll marry her. I have made up my mind on't. Spare me all your remonstrances—all your mock compassion. Nor is it like a fellow who has not seen the world in its best gala suit, affecting to despise rank, splendour, and high station: *I have* seen the thing, I have cantered my thoroughbred along Rotten-row, eaten my truffled dinners in Belgravia, whispered my nonsense over the white shoulders of the fairest and best-born of England's daughters. I know to a decimal fraction the value of all these, and, what's more, I know what one pays for them. The miserable vassalage, the poor slavery of mind, soul, and body they cost!

"It is the terror of exclusion here, the dread of coldness there—the possibility of offence to 'his grace,' on this side, or misconception by 'her ladyship,' on that—sway and rule a man so that he may neither eat, drink, nor sleep, without a 'Court Guide' in his pocket. I've done with it! now and for ever—I tell you frankly—I return no more to this bondage.

"I have written a farewell address to my worthy constituents of Oughterard. I have told them, that, 'feeling an instinct of independence within me, I can no longer remain their representative. That, as a man of honour, I shrink from the jobbery of the little borough politicians, and, as a gentleman, I beg to decline their intimacy.' They took me for want of a better—I leave them for the same reason.

"To my father I have said, 'Let us make a compromise. As your son I have a claim on the House. Now what will you give for my share? I'll neither importune you for place, nor embarrass you with solicitations for employment. Help me to stock my knapsack, and I'll find my road myself.' *She* knows nothing of these steps on my part—nor shall she, till they have become irrevocable. She is too proud ever to consent to what would cost me thus heavily; but the expense once incurred—the outlay made—she cannot object to what has become the law of my future life.

"I send off these two documents to-night; this done, I shall write to her an offer of marriage. What a fever I'm in! and all because I feel the necessity of defending myself to *you*—to you of all men the most headstrong, reckless, and self-indulgent—a fellow who never curbed a caprice nor restrained a passing fancy; and yet you are just the man to light your cigar, and while you puff away your blue cloud, mutter on about rashness, folly, insanity, and the rest of it, as if the state of your bank account should make that wisdom in *you*, which with *me* is but mere madness! But I tell you, Harry, it is your very thousands per annum that preclude you from doing what I can. It is your house in town, your stud at Tattersall's, your yacht at Cowes, your grouse-lodge in the Highlands, that tie and fetter you to live like some scores of others, with whom you haven't one solitary sympathy, save in income! You are bound up in all the recognisances of your wealth, to dine stupidly, sup languidly, and sink down at last into a marriage of convenience—to make a wife of her whom 'her Grace' has chosen for you without a single speculation in the contract save the thought of the earl you will be allied to, and the four noble families you'll have the right to go in mourning for.

"And what worse than cant it is to talk of what they call an indiscreet match! What does—what can the world know as to the reasons that impel you, or me, or anybody else, to form a certain attachment? Are they acquainted with our secret and most hidden emotions? Do they understand the project of life we have planned to ourselves? Have they read our utter weariness and contempt for forms that *they* venerate, and social distinctions that *they* worship? I am aware that in some cases it requires courage to do this; and in doing it a man virtually throws down the glove to the whole world, and says, 'This woman's love is to me more than all of you,—and so say I at this moment. I must cry halt, I see, Harry. I have set these nerves at work in my wound, and the pain is agony. To-morrow—to-night, if I'm able—I shall continue.

"Midnight.

"They have just wished me good night, after having spent the evening here reading out the newspapers for me, commenting upon them, and exerting themselves to amuse me in a hundred good-natured ways. You would like this same stately old Lady Dorothea. She is really 'Grande Dame' in every respect—dress, air, carriage, gesture, even her slow and measured speech is imposing, and her prejudices, uttered as they are in such perfect sincerity of heart, have something touching about them, and her sorrowful pity for the mob sounded more gracefully than Kate's enthusiastic estimate of their high deservings. It does go terribly against the grain to fancy an alliance between coarse natures and noble sentiments, and to believe in the native nobility of those who never touch soap! I have had a kind of skirmish with La Henderson upon this theme to-night. She was cross and out of temper, and bore my bantering badly. The fact is, she is utterly disgusted at the turn things have taken in France, and not altogether without reason, since, after all their bluster, and bloodshed, and barricades, they have gone back to a monarchy again. They barred out the master to make 'the head usher,' top of the school. Let us see if he won't be as fond of the birch as his predecessor. Like all mutineers, they found they couldn't steer the ship when they had murdered the captain! How hopeless it makes one of humanity to see such a spectacle as this, Harry, and how low is one's estimate of the species after such experience! You meet some half-dozen semi-bald, spectacled old gentlemen in society, somewhat more reserved than the rest of the company, fond of talking to each other, and rather distrustful of strangers; you find them slow conversers at dinner,—sorry whist-players in the drawing-room; you are told, however, that one is a President of the Council, another the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and a third something equally important. You venerate them accordingly, while you mutter the old Swede's apothegm about the 'small intelligences' that rule mankind. Wait a while! There is a row in the streets: a pickpocket has appealed to the public to rescue him from the ignoble hands of the police—an escaped felon has fired at the judge who sentenced him, in the name of Liberty and Fraternity. No matter what the cause, there *is* a row. The troops are called out; some are beaten, some join the insurgents. The government grows frightened—temporises—offers terms—and sends for more soldiers. The people—I never clearly knew what the word meant—the people, make extravagant demands, and will not even give time to have them granted—in a word, the whole state is subverted, the King, if there be one, in flight, the royal family missing, the ministers nowhere! No great loss you'll say, if the four or five smooth-faced imbecilities we have spoken of are not to the fore! But there is your error, Harry—your great error. These men, used to conduct and carry on the government, cannot be replaced. The new capacities do nothing but blunder, and maybe issue contradictory orders and impede each others actions. To improvise a Secretary of State is about as wise a proceeding as to take at hazard a third-class passenger and set him to guide the engine of a train. The only difference is that the machinery of state is ten thousand times more complex than that of a steam-engine, and the powers for mischief and misfortune in due proportion.

"But why talk of these things? I have had enough and too much of them already, this evening; women, too, are unpleasant disputants in politics. They attach their faith to persons, not parties. Miss Henderson is, besides, a little spoiled by the notice of those maxim-mongers who write leaders in the *Débats*, and articles for the *Deux Mondes*. They have, or affect to have, a kind of pitying estimate for our English constitutional forms, which is rather offensive. At least, she provoked me, and I am relapsing into bad temper, just by thinking of it.

"You tell me that you once served with Captain Martin, and

I see you understand him; not that it requires much study to do so. You say, he was reckoned a good officer; what a sneer is that on the art military!

"There are, however, many suitable qualities about him, and he certainly possesses the true and distinctive element of a gentleman—he knows how to be idle. Ay, Harry, that is a privilege that your retired banker or enriched cotton-spinner never attains to. They must be up and doing—where there is nothing to do. They carry the spirit of the counting-house and the loom into society with them, and having found a pleasure in business, they want to make a business of pleasure. Now, Martin understands idling to perfection. His tea and toast, his mutton cutlet, and his mustachios are abundant occupation for him. With luncheon about two o'clock, he saunters through the stables, sucking a lighted cigar, filing his nails, and admiring his boots, till it's time to ride out. He comes to me about nine of an evening, and we play piquet till I get sleepy; after which he goes to 'the rooms,' and, I believe, plays high; at least, I suspect so; for he has, at times, the forced calm—that semi-jocular resignation—one sees in a heavy loser. He has been occasionally, too, probing me about Merl—you remember the fellow who had the rooms near Knightsbridge—so that I opine he has been dabbling in loans. What a sorry spectacle such a creature as this in the toils of the Israelite, for he is the 'softest of the soft.' I see it from the effect La Henderson has produced upon him. He is in love with her—actually in love. He even wanted to make me his confidant—and I narrowly escaped the confession—only yesterday evening. Of course, he has no suspicion of my attachment in the same quarter, so that it would be downright treachery in me to listen to his avowal. Another feeling, too, sways me, Harry—I don't think I could hear a man profess admiration for the woman that I mean to marry, without the self-same sense of resentment I should experience were I already her husband. I'm certain I'd shoot him for it.

"La belle Kate and I parted coldly—drily, I should call it—this evening. I had fancied she was above coquetry, but she is not. Is any woman? She certainly gave the captain what the world would call encouragement all the night; listened attentively to tiresome tiger huntings and stories of the new country; questioned him about his Mahratta campaigns, and even hinted at how much she would like an Indian life. Perhaps the torment she was inflicting on Lady Dorothea amused her, perhaps it was the irritation she witnessed in me, gave the zest to this pastime. It is seldom that she condescends to be either amused or amusing; and I own it is a part does not suit her. She is a thousand times more attractive sitting over her embroidery-frame, raising her head at times to say a few words—ever apposite and well chosen—always simple, too, and to the purpose; or even by a slight gesture bearing agreement with what is said around her; till, with a sudden impulse, she pours forth fast, rapidly, and fluently some glowing sentiment of praise or censure, some glorious eulogy of the good, or some withering depreciation of the wrong. Then it is that you see how dark those eyes can be, how deep-toned that voice, and with what delicacy of expression she can mould and fashion every mood of mind, and give utterance to sentiments that till then none have ever known how to embody.

"It is such a descent to her to play coquette! Cleopatra cannot—should not, be an Abigail. I am low and depressed to-night. I scarcely know why: indeed, I have less reason than usual for heavy-heartedness. These people are singularly kind and attentive to me, and seem to have totally forgotten how ungratefully once before I repaid their civilities. What a stupid mistake do we commit in not separating our public life from our social one, so as to show that our opinions upon measures of state are disconnected with all the sentiments we maintain for our private friendships. I detect a hundred sympathies, inconceivable points of contact, between these people and myself. We pass hours praising the same things, and abusing the same people; and how could it possibly sever our relations that I would endow Maynooth when they would pull it down, or that I liked forty-shilling freeholders better than ten-pound householders? You'll say that a certain earnestness accompanies strong convictions, and that when a man is deeply impressed with some supposed truths, he'll not measure his reprobation of those who assail them. But a lawyer does all this, and forfeits nothing of the esteem of 'his learned brother on the opposite side.' Nay, they exchange very ugly knocks at times, and inflict very unseemly marks even with the gloves on: still they go homeward, arm-in-arm, after, and laugh heartily at both plaintiff and defendant. By Jove! Harry, it may sound ill, but somehow it seems as though to secure even a moderate share of enjoyment in this life one must throne Expediency in the seat of Principle. I'll add the conclusion to-morrow, and now, say, good night.

"Three days have passed over since I wrote the last time to you, and it would require as many weeks, were I to chronicle all that has passed through my mind in the interval. Events there have been few; but, sensations—emotions, enough for a lifetime. Nor dare I recal them! Faintly endeavouring to trace a few broken memories, my pains of mind and body come back again, so that you must bear with me, if I be incoherent, almost unintelligible.

"The day after I wrote to you, I never saw her. My lady, who came as usual to visit me in the day, said something about Miss Henderson having a headache. Unpleasant letters from her family—obliged to give up the day to answering them—but, all so confused, and with such evident constraint as to show me that something disagreeable loomed in view.

"The captain dropped in about four o'clock, and as the weather was unfavourable, we sat down to our party of piquet. By a little address, I continued to lose nearly every game, and so, gradually led him into a conversation while we played; but I soon saw that he only knew something had occurred 'up stairs,' but knew not what.

"'I suspect, however," added he. 'It is only the old question as to Kate's going away.'

"'Going away! Going where?' cried I.

"'Home to her father; she is resolutely bent upon it—has been so ever since we left Paris. My mother, who evidently—but on what score, I know not—had some serious difference with her, is now most eager to make concessions, and would stoop to—what for her is no trifle—even solicitation to induce her to stay, has utterly failed; so too, has my father. Persuasion and entreaty not succeeding, I suspect—but it is only suspicion—that they have had recourse to parental authority, and asked old Henderson to interfere. At least, a letter has come this morning from the west of Ireland, for Kate, which I surmise to be in his hand. She gave it, immediately on reading it, to my mother, and I could detect in her ladyship's face, while she perused it, unmistakable signs of satisfaction. When she handed it back, too, she gave a certain condescending smile, which, in my mother, implies victory, and seems to say, "Let us be friends, now—I'm going to signal—cease firing."'

"'And Kate, did she make any remark—say anything?'

"'Not a syllable. She folded up the document, carefully and steadily, and placed it in her work-box, and then resumed her embroidery in silence. I watched her narrowly, while I affected to read the paper, and saw that she had to rip out half she had done. After a while my mother said,

"'"You'll not answer that letter to-day, probably?"

"'"I mean to do so, my lady," said she; "and, with your permission, will beg you to read my reply."

"'"Very well," said my mother, and left the room. I was standing outside on the balcony at the time, so that Kate believed, after my mother's departure, she was quite alone. It was then she opened the letter, and re-read it carefully. I never took my eyes off her; and yet what was passing in her mind, whether joy, grief, disappointment, or pleasure, I defy any man to declare; nor when, having laid it down once more, she took up her work, not a line or a lineament betrayed her. It was plain enough the letter was no pleasant one, and I expected to have heard her sigh perhaps, or, at least, show some sign of depression; but no, she went on calmly, and at last began to sing, in a low, faint voice, barely audible where I stood, one of her little barcarole songs she is so fond of; and if there was no sorrow in her own heart, by Jove! she made mine throb heavily as I listened! I stood it as long as I was able, and then coughed to show that I was there, and entered the room. She never lifted her head, or noticed me, not even when I drew a chair close to her, and sat down at her side.

"'I suppose, Massingbred,' said he, after a pause, 'you'll laugh at me, if I tell you I was in love with the Governess! Well, I should have laughed too, some six months ago, if any man had prophesied it; but the way I put the matter to myself is this: If I do succeed to a good estate, I have a right to indulge my own fancy in a wife; if I don't—that is, if I be a ruined man—where's the harm in marrying beneath me?'

"'Quite right, admirably argued," said I, impatiently; 'go on.'

"'I'm glad you agree with me,' said he, with the stupid satisfaction of imbecility. 'I thought I had reduced the question to its very narrowest bounds.'

"'So you have; go on,' cried I.

"'"Miss Henderson," said I—for I determined to show that I was speaking seriously, and so I didn't call her Kate—"Miss Henderson, I want to speak to you. I have been long seeking this opportunity; and if you will vouchsafe me a few minutes now, and hear me, on a subject upon which all my happiness in life depends——"

"'When I got that far she put her work down on her knee, and stared at me with those large, full eyes of hers so steadily—ay, so haughtily, too—that I half wished myself fifty miles away.

"'"Captain Martin," said she, in a low, distinct voice, "has it ever occurred to you in life to have, by a mere moment of reflection—a sudden flash of intelligence—saved yourself from some step, some act which, if accomplished, had brought nothing but outrage to your feeling, and insult to your self-esteem? Let such now rescue you from resuming this theme."

"'"But you don't understand me," said I. "What I wish to say——" Just at that instant my father came into the room in search of her, and I made my escape to hide the confusion that I felt ready to overwhelm me.'

"'And have you not seen her since?'

"'No. Indeed, I think it quite as well, too. She'll have time to think over what I said, and see what a deuced good offer it is; for though I know she was going to make objections about inequality of station and all that, at the time, reflection will bring better thoughts.'

"'And she'll consent, you think?'

"'I wish I had a bet on it,' said he.

"'So you shall, then,' said I, endeavouring to seem thoroughly at my ease. 'It's a very unworthy occasion for a wager, Martin; but I'll lay five hundred to one she refuses you.'

"'Taken, and booked,' cried he, writing it down in his note-book. 'I only regret it is not in thousands.'

"'So it should be, if I could honestly stake what I haven't got.'

"'You are so sanguine of winning?'

"'So certain, you ought to say.'

"'Of course you use no influence against me—you take no step of any kind to affect her decision.'

"'Certainly not.'

"'Nor are you—— But,' added he, laughing, 'I needn't make that proviso. I was going to say, you are not to ask her yourself.'

"'I'll even promise you, that, if you like,' said I.

"'Then what can you mean?' said he, with a puzzled look. 'But whatever it be, I can stand the loss. I've won very close to double as much from you this evening.'

"'And as to the disappointment?'

"Oh, *you'll* not mention it, I'm certain, neither will she, so none will be the wiser; and, after all, the real bore in all these cases is the gossip.' And with this consolatory reflection he left me to dress for dinner. How well bred a fellow seems who has no feeling, but just tact enough to detect the tone of the world and follow it. That's Martin's case, and his manners are perfect! After he was gone, I was miserable for not having quarrelled with him—said something outrageous, insolent, and unbearable. That he should have dared to insult the young girl by such presumption as the offer of *his* hand is really too much. What difference of station—wide as the poles asunder—could compare with their real inequality. The fop, the idler, the incompetent, to aspire to *her!* Even his very narrative proclaimed his mean nature, wandering on as it did, from a lounge on the balcony to an offer of marriage!

"Now, to conclude this wearisome story—and I fancy, Harry, that already you half deem me a fitting rival for the tiresome captain—but to finish, Martin came early into my room, and laying a banknote for 100*l.* on the bed, merely added, 'You were right; there's your money.' I'd have given double the sum to hear the details of this affair—in what terms the refusal was conveyed—on what grounds she based it; but he would not afford me the slightest satisfactian on any of these points. Indeed, he displayed more vigour of character than I suspected in him, in the way he arrested my inquiries. He left this for Paris immediately after, so that the mystery of that interview will doubtless remain impenetrable to me.

"We are all at sixes and sevens to-day. Old Martin, shocked by some tidings of Ireland that he chanced upon in the public papers, I believe, has had a stroke of paralysis, or a seizure resembling that malady. Lady Dorothea is quite helpless from terror, and but for Kate, the whole household would be in utter chaos and disorganisation; but she goes about, with her arm in a sling, calm and tranquil, but with the energy and activity of one who feels that all depends upon her guidance and direction. The servants obey her with a promptitude that proclaims instinct; and even the doctor lays aside the mysterious jargon of his craft, and condescends to talk sense to her. I have not seen her; passing rumours only reach me in my solitude, and I sit here writing and brooding alternately.

"P.S.—Martin is a little better; no immediate danger to life, but slight hopes of ultimate recovery. I was wrong as to the cause. It was a proclamation of outlawry against his son the captain, which he read in the *Times.* Some implacable creditor or other had pushed his claim so far, as I believe is easy enough to do now-a-days; and poor Martin, who connected this stigma with all the disgrace that once accompanied such a sentence, fell senseless to the ground, and was taken up palsied. He is perfectly collected and even tranquil now, and they wheeled me in to sit with him for an hour or so. Lady Dorothea behaves admirably; the first shock overwhelmed her, but that passed off, and she is now all that could be imagined of tenderness and zeal.

"Kate I saw but for a second. She asked me to write to Captain Martin, and request him to hasten home. It was no time to trifle with her, so I simply promised to do so, adding,

"'*You*, I trust, will not leave this at such a moment?'

"'Assuredly not,' said she, slightly colouring at what implied my knowledge of her plans.

"'Then all will go on well in that case,' said I.

"'I never knew that I was reckoned what people call lucky,' said she, smiling. 'Indeed, most of those with whom I have been associated in life, might say the opposite.' And then, without waiting to hear me, she left the room.

"My brain is throbbing and my cheeks burning; some feverish access is upon me. So I send off this ere I grow worse.

"Your faithful friend,

"JACK MASSINGBRED."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW ROGUES AGREE!

Leaving the Martins in their quiet retreat at Spa, nor dwelling any longer on a life whose daily monotony was unbroken by an incident, we once more turn our glance westward. Were we assured that our kind readers' sympathies were with us, the change would be a pleasure to us, since it is there, in that wild mountain tract, that pathless region of fern and wild furze, that we love to linger, rambling half listlessly through silent glens and shady gorges, or sitting pensively on the storm-lashed shore, till sea and sky melt into one, and nought lowers through the gloom save the tall crags above us.

We are once more back again at the little watering-place of Kilkieran, to which we introduced our readers in an early chapter of this narrative; but another change has come over that humble locality. The Osprey's Nest, the ornamented villa, on which her ladyship had squandered so lavishly good money and bad taste, was now an inn! A vulgar sign-board, representing a small boat in a heavy sea, hung over the door, with the words, "The Corragh" written underneath. The spacious saloon, whose bay-windows opened on the Atlantic, was now a coffee-room, and the small boudoir that adjoined it—desecration of desecrations—the bar!

It needs not to have been the friend or favoured guest beneath a roof where elegance and refinement have prevailed to feel the shock at seeing them replaced by all that ministers to coarse pleasure and vulgar association. The merest stranger cannot but experience a sense of disgust at the contrast. Whichever way you turned, some object met the eye recalling past splendour and present degradation; indeed, Toby Shea, the landlord.

seemed to feel as one of his brightest prerogatives the right of insulting the memory of his predecessors, and throwing into stronger antithesis the "former" and the "now."

"Here ye are now, sir, in my lady's own parlour, and that's her bedroom, where I left your trunk," said he, as he ushered in a newly-arrived traveller, whose wet and road-stained drapery bore traces of an Irish winter's day. Mr. Scanlan told me that your honor would be here at four o'clock, and he ordered dinner for two, at five, and a good dinner you'll have."

"There; let them open my traps, and fetch me a pair of slippers and a dressing-gown," broke in the traveller: "and be sure to have a good fire in my bedroom. What an infernal climate! It has rained since the day I landed at Dublin, and now that I have come down here, it has blown a hurricane besides. And how cold this room is," added he, shuddering.

"That's all by reason of them windows," said Toby; "French windows they call them; but I'll get real Irish sashes put up next season, if I live. It was a fancy of that ould woman that built the place to have nothing that wasn't foreign."

"They are not popular, then—the Martins?" asked the stranger.

"Popular!" echoed Toby. "Be Gorra they are not. Why would they be? Is it rack-renting, process sarving, extirminating, would make them popular? Sure we're all ruined on the estate. There isn't a mother's son of us mightn't be in gaol! and it's not Maurice's fault either—Mr. Scanlan's, I mean. Your honor's a friend of his, I believe," added he, stealthily. The stranger gave a short nod. "Sure he only does what he's ordered, and it's breaking his heart it is to do them cruel things they force him to."

"Was the management of the estate better when they lived at home?" asked the stranger.

"Some say yes, more says no. I never was their tenant myself, for I lived in Oughterard, and kept the "Goose and Griddle" in John-street; but I believe, if the truth was told, it was always pretty much the same. They were azy and moderate when they didn't want money, but ready to take your skin off your back when they were hard up."

"And is that their present condition?"

"I think it is," said he, with a confident grin. "They're spending thousands for hundreds since they went abroad; and that chap in the dragoons—the captain they call him—sells a farm, or a plot of ground, just the way ye'd tear a leaf out of a book. There's Mr. Maurice now—and I'll go and hurry the dinner, for he'll give us no peace if we're a minute late."

The stranger—or, to give him his proper name, Mr. Merl—now approached the window, and watched, not without admiration, the skilful management by which Scanlan skimmed along the strand, zigzagging his smart nags through all the awkward impediments of the way, and wending his tandem through what appeared a labyrinth of confusion.

Men bred and born in great cities are somewhat prone to fancy that certain accomplishments, such as tandem-driving, steeple-chasing, and such like, are the exclusive acquirements of rank and station. They have only witnessed them as the gifts of guardsmen and "young squires of high degree," never suspecting that in the country a very inferior class is often endowed with these skilful arts. Mr. Merl felt, therefore, no ordinary reverence for Maurice Scanlan, a sentiment fully reciprocated by the attorney, as he beheld the gorgeous dressing-gown, rich tasseled cap, and Turkish trousers of the other.

"I thought I'd arrive before you, sir," said Scanlan, with a profound bow, as he entered the room; "but I'm glad *you* got in first. What a shower that was."

"Shower!" said Merl; "a West India hurricane is a zephyr to it. I'd not live in this climate if you'd give me the whole Martin estate!"

"I'm sure of it, sir; one must be bred in the place, and know no better, to stand it." And although the speech was uttered in all humility, Merl gave the speaker a searching glance, as though to say, "Don't lose your time trying to humbug *me*—I'm 'York' too." Indeed, there was a species of freemasonry in the looks that now passed between the two; each seemed instinctively to feel that he was in the presence of an equal, and that artifice and deceit might be laid aside for the nonce.

"I hope you agree with me," said Scanlan, in a lower and more confidential voice, "that this was the best place to come to. Here you can stay as long as you like, and nobody the wiser; but in the town of Oughterard, they'd be at you morning, noon, and night—tracking your steps—questioning the waiter, ay, and maybe taking a peep at your letters. I've known that same before now."

"Well, I suppose you're right, only this place does look a little dull, I confess."

"It's not the season, to be sure," said Scanlan, apologetically.

"Oh! and there *is* a season here?"

"Isn't there, by George!" said Maurice, smacking his lips. "I've seen two heifers killed here of a morning, and not so much as a beefsteak to be got before twelve o'clock. 'Tis the height of fashion comes down here in July—the Rams of Kiltimmon, and the Bodkins of Crossmaglin; and there was talk last year of a lord—I forget his name, but he ran away from Newmarket, and the story went that he was making for this."

"Any play?" asked Merl.

"Play is it? That there is; whist every night and backgammon."

Merl threw up his eyebrows with pretty much the same feeling with which the Great Napoleon repeated the words "Bows and Arrows!" as the weapons of a force that offered him alliance.

"If you'd allow me to dine in this trim, Mr. Scanlan," said he, "I'd ask you to order dinner."

"I was only waiting for you to give the word, sir," said Maurice, reverting to the habit of respect at any fresh display of the other's pretensions; and opening the door, he gave a shrill whistle.

The landlord himself answered the summons, and whispered a few words in Scanlan's ear.

"That's it, always," cried Maurice, angrily. "I never came into the house for the last ten days without hearing the same story. I'd like to know who and what he is, that must always have the best that's going?" Then turning to Merl, he added: "It's a lodger he has upstairs, an old fellow that came about a fortnight back; and if there's a fine fish, or a fat turkey, or a good saddle of mutton to be got, he'll have it."

"Faix, he pays well," said Toby, "whoever he is."

"And he has secured our salmon, I find, and left us to dine on whiting," said Maurice.

"An eighteen-pound fish!" echoed Toby; "and it would be as much as my life is worth to cut it in two."

"And he's alone, too?"

"No, sir. Mr. Crow, the painter, is to dine with him. He's making drawings for him of all the wonderful places down the coast."

"Well, give us what we're to have at once," said Maurice, angrily. "The basket of wine was taken out of the gig?"

"Yes, sir; all's right and ready for you, and barrin' the fish you'll have an elegant dinner."

This little annoyance over, the guests relished their fare like hungry men; nor, time and place considered, was it to be despised.

"Digestion is a great leveller:" Mr. Merl and Mr. Scanlan felt far more on an equality when, the dinner over and the door closed, they drew the table close to the fire, and drank to each other in a glass of racy port.

"Well, I believe a man might live here, after all," said Merl, as he gazed admiringly on the bright hues of his variegated lower garments.

"I'm proud to hear you say so," said Scanlan; "for, of course, you've seen a deal of life—and when I say life, I mean fashion and high style—nobs and swells."

"Yes; I believe I have," said Merl, lighting his cigar; "that was always *my* 'line.' I fancy there's few fellows going have more experience of the really great world than Herman Merl."

"And you like it?" asked Maurice, confidentially.

"I do, and I do not," said the Jew, hesitatingly. "To one like myself, who knows them all, always on terms of close intimacy—friendship, I may say—it's all very well; but take a new hand just launched into life, a fellow not of their own set—why, sir, there's no name for the insults and outrage he'll meet with."

"But what could they do?" asked Scanlan, inquiringly.

"What?—anything, everything; laugh at him, live on him, win his last guinea—and then, blackball him!"

"And, couldn't he get a crack at them?"

"A what?"

"Couldn't he have a shot at some of them, at least?" asked Maurice.

"No, no," said Mr. Merl, half contemptuously; "they don't do *that*."

"Faix! and we'd do it down here," said Scanlan, "devil may care who or what he was that tried the game."

"But, I'm speaking of London and Paris; I'm not alluding to the Sandwich Islands," said Merl, on whose brain the port and the strong fire were already producing their effects.

Scanlan's face flushed angrily; but a glance at the other checked the reply he was about to make, and he merely pushed the decanter across the table.

"You see, sir," said Merl, in the tone of a man laying down a great dictum, "there's worlds and worlds. There's Claude Willoughby's world, which is young Martin's and Stanhope's and mine. There, we are all young fellows of fortune, good family, good prospects, you understand—no, thank you, no more wine—I feel that what I've taken has got into my head; and this cigar, too, is none of the best. Would it be taking too great a liberty with you if I were to snatch a ten minutes' doze—just ten minutes?"

"Treat me like an old friend; make yourself quite at home," said Maurice. "There's enough here"—and he pointed to the bottles on the table—"to keep me company, and I'll wake you up when I've finished them."

Mr. Merl made no reply, but drawing a chair for his legs, and disposing his drapery gracefully around him, he closed his eyes, and before Maurice had replenished his glass, gave audible evidence of a sound sleep.

Now, worthy reader, we practise no deceptions with you; nor so far as we are able, do we allow others to do so. It is but fair, therefore, to tell you, that Mr. Merl was not asleep, nor had he any tendency whatever to slumber about him. That astute gentleman, however, had detected that the port was, with the addition of a great fire, too much for him; he recognised in himself certain indications of confusion that implied wandering and uncertain faculties, and he resolved to arrest the progress of such symptoms by a little repose. He felt, in short, that if he had been engaged in play, that he should have at once "cut out," and so he resolved to give himself the advantage of the prerogative which attaches to a tired traveller. There he lay then, with closed eyes—breathing heavily—to all appearance sound asleep.

Maurice Scanlan, meanwhile, scanned the recumbent figure before him with the eye of a connoisseur. We have once before said, that Mr. Scanlan's jockey experiences had marvellously aided his worldly craft, and that he scrutinised those with whom he came in contact through life, with all the shrewd acumen he would have bestowed upon a horse whose purchase he meditated. It was easy to see that the investigation puzzled him. Mr. Merl did not belong to any one category he had ever seen before. Maurice was acquainted with various ranks and conditions of men; but here was a new order, not referable to any known class. He opened Captain Martin's letter, which he carried in his pocket-book, and re-read it; but it was vague and uninstructive. He merely requested that "every attention might be paid to his friend Mr. Merl, who wanted to see something of the west, and know all about the condition of the people, and such like. He's up to everything, Master Maurice," continued the writer, "and so, just the man for *you*." There was little to be gleaned from this source, and so he felt, as he folded and replaced the epistle in his pocket.

"What can he be," thought Scanlan, "and what brings him down here? Is he a Member of Parliament, that wants to make himself up about Ireland and Irish grievances? Is he a money-lender, that wants to see the security before he makes a loan? Are they thinking of him for the agency?"—and Maurice flushed as the suspicion crossed him—"or is it after Miss Mary he is?" And a sudden paleness covered his face at the thought. "I'd give a cool hundred, this minute, I could read you," said he to himself. "Ay, and I'd not ask any one's help how to deal with us afterwards," added he, as he drained off his glass. While he was thus ruminating, a gentle tap was heard at the door, and, anxious not to disturb the sleeper, Scanlan crossed the room with noiseless steps, and opened it.

"Oh, it's you, Simmy," said he, in a low voice: "come in, and make no noise; he's asleep."

"And that's him!" said Crow, standing still to gaze on the recumbent figure before him, which he scrutinised with all an artist's appreciation.

"Ay, and what do you think of him?" whispered Scanlan.

"That chap is a Jew," said Sim, in the same cautious tone. "I know the features well; you see the very image of him in the old Venetian pictures. Whenever they wanted cunning and cruelty—but more cunning than cruelty—they always took that type."

"I wouldn't wonder if you were right, Simmy," said Scanlan, on whom a new light was breaking.

"I know I am; look at the spread of the nostrils, and the thick, full lips, and the coarse, projecting under-jaw. Faix!" said he to himself, "I've seen the day I'd like to have had a study of your face."

"Indeed!" said Scanlan.

"Just so; he'd make a great Judas!" said Crow, enthusiastically. "It is the miser all over. You know," added he, "if one took him in the historical way, you'd get rid of the vulgarity, and make him grander and finer; for, looking at him now, he might be a dog-stealer."

Scanlan gave a low, cautious laugh as he placed a chair beside his own for the artist, and filled out for him a bumper of port.

"I was just dying for a glass of this," said Crow. "I dined with Mr. Barry up-stairs; and though he's a fine-hearted old fellow in many respects, he's too abstemious; a pint of sherry for two at dinner, and a pint of port after, that's the allowance. Throw out as many hints as you like, suggest how and what you will, but devil a drop more you'll get."

"And who is he?" asked Scanlan.

"I wish you could tell me," said Crow.

"You haven't a notion; nor what he is?"

"Not the slightest. I think, indeed, he said he was in the army; but I'm not clear it wasn't a commissary or a surgeon; maybe he was, but he knows a little about everything. Take him on naval matters, and he understands them well; ask him about foreign countries—egad, he was everywhere. Ireland seems the only place new to him, and it won't be so long, for he goes among the people, and talks to them, and hears all they have to say, with a patience that breaks my heart. Like all strangers, he's astonished with the acuteness he meets with, and never ceases saying, 'Ain't they a wonderful people? Who ever saw their equal for intelligence?'"

"Bother!" said Scanlan, contemptuously.

"But it is not bother! Maurice; he's right. They are just what he says."

"Arrah! don't be humbugging *me*, Mr Crow," said the other. "They're a set of scheming, plotting vagabonds, that are unmanageable by any one, except a fellow that has the key to them as I have."

"*You* know them, that's true," said Crow, half apologetically, for he liked the port, and did not feel he ought to push contradiction too far.

"And that's more than your friend Barry does, or ever will," said Scanlan. "I defy an Englishman—I don't care how shrewd he is—to understand Paddy."

A slight movement on Mr. Merl's part here admonished the speaker to speak lower.

"Ay," continued Maurice, "that fellow there—whoever he is or whatever he is—is no fool; he's deep enough: and yet there's not a bare-legged gossoon on the estate I won't back to take him in."

"But Barry's another kind of man entirely. You wouldn't call him 'cute or cunning; but he's a sensible, well-judging man, that has seen a deal of life."

"And what is it, he says, brings him here?" asked Scanlan.

"He never said a word about that yet," replied Crow, "further than his desire to visit a country he had heard much of, and, if I understood him aright, where some of his ancestors came from; for, you see, at times he's not so easy for one to follow, for he has a kind of a foreign twang in his tongue, and often mumbles to himself in a strange language."

"I mistrust all these fellows that go about the world, pretending they want to see this, and observe that," said Scanlan, sententiously.

"It's mighty hard to mistrust a man that gives you the likes of that," said Crow, as he drew a neatly-folded bank-note from his pocket, and handed it to Scanlan.

"Twenty pounds! And he gave you that?"

"This very evening. 'It is a little more than our bargain, Mr. Crow,' said he, 'but not more than I can afford to give; and so I hope you'll not refuse it.' These were his words, as he took my lot of drawings—poor daubs they were—and placed them in his portfolio."

"So that he is rich?" said Maurice, pensively.

"There seems no end of his money; there's not a day goes over he doesn't spend fifteen or sixteen pounds in meat, potatoes, barley, and the like. Sure, you may say he's been feeding the two islands himself for the last fortnight, and what's more, one mustn't as much as allude to it. He gets angry at the slightest word that can bring the subject forward. It was the other day he said to myself: 'If you can relieve destitution, without too much parade of its sufferings, you are not only obviating the vulgar display of rich benevolence, but you are inculcating high sentiments and delicacy of feeling in those that are relieved. Take care how you pauperise the heart of a people, for you'll have to make a workhouse of the nation.'"

"Sure, they're paupers already!" exclaimed Scanlan, contemptuously. "When I hear all these elegant sentiments uttered about Ireland, I know a man is an ass! This is a poor country—the people is poor, the gentry is poor, the climate isn't the best, and bad as it is you're never sure of it. All that anybody can hope to do, is to make his living out of it; but as to improving it—raising the intellectual standard of the people—and all that balderdash we hear of, you might just as well tell me that there was an Act of Parliament to make everybody in Connaught six feet high. Nature says one thing, and it signifies mighty little if the House of Commons says the other."

"And you're telling me this in the very spot that contradicts every word you say!" cried Crow, half angrily, for the port had given him courage, and the decanter waxed low.

"How so?" exclaimed Scanlan.

"Here, where we sit—on this very estate of Cro' Martin—where a young girl—a child the other day—has done more to raise the condition of the people, to educate and civilize, than the last six generations together."

A long wailing whistle from Scanlan was the insulting reply to the assertion.

"What do you mean by that?" cried Crow, passionately.

"I mean that she has done more mischief to the property than five-and-forty years' good management will ever repair. Now don't be angry, Simmy; keep your temper, and draw your chair back again to the table. I'm not going to say one word against her intentions; but when I see the waste of thousands of pounds on useless improvements, elegant roads that lead nowhere, bridges that nobody will ever pass, and harbours without boats, not to say the habits of dependence the people have got by finding everything done for them. I tell you again, ten years more of Miss Mary's rule will finish the estate."

"I don't believe a word of it!" blurted out Simmy, boldly. "I saw her yesterday coming out of a cabin, where she passed above an hour, nursing typhus fever and cholera. The cloak she took off the door—for she left it there to dry—was still soaked with rain, her wet hair hung down her shoulders, and as she stood bridling her own pony—for there was not a living soul to help her——"

"She'd have made an elegant picture," broke in Scanlan, with a laugh. "But that's exactly the fault of us in Ireland—we are all picturesque—I wish we were prosperous! But come, Simmy, finish your wine; it's not worth disputing about. If all I hear about matters be true, there will be very little left of Cro' Martin when the debts are paid."

"What! do you mean to say that they're in difficulty?"

"Far worse; the stories that reach me call it—ruin!"

Simmy drew his chair closer to the table, and in a whisper scarcely breathed, said, "That chap's not asleep, Maurice."

"I know it," whispered the other; and added, aloud, "Many a fellow that thinks he has the first charge on the property will soon discover his mistake; there are mortgages of more than eighty years' standing on the estate. You've had a great sleep, sir," said he, addressing Merl, who now yawned and opened his eyes; "I hope our talking didn't disturb you?"

"Not in the least," said Merl, rising and stretching his legs. "I'm all right now, and quite fresh for anything."

"Let me introduce Mr. Crow to you, sir—a native artist that we're all proud of."

"That's exactly what you are not, then," said Crow; "nor would you be if I deserved it. You'd rather gain a cause at the Quarter Sessions, or take in a friend about a horse, than be the man that painted the Madonna at Florence."

"He's cross this evening—cross and ill-humoured," said Scanlan, laughing. "Maybe he'll be better tempered when we have tea."

"I was just going to ask for it," said Merl, as he arranged his whiskers, and performed a small impromptu toilet before the glass, while Simmy issued forth to give the necessary orders.

"We'll have tea, and a rubber of dummy afterwards," said Scanlan, "if you've no objection."

"Whatever you like—I'm quite at your disposal," replied Merl, who now seated himself with an air of bland amiability, ready, according to the amount of the stake, to win pounds or lose sixpences.

CHAPTER XL.

MR. MERL "AT FENCE."

All the projects which Mr. Scanlan had struck out for Merl's occupation on the following day were marred by the unfavourable weather. It blew fiercely from the westward, driving upon shore a tremendous sea, and sending white masses of drift and foam far inland. The rain, too, came down in torrents. The low-lying clouds, which scarcely reached more than half-way up the mountain sides, seemed as if rent asunder at times, and from them came a deluge, filling all the water-courses, and swelling rivulets to the size of mighty torrents. The unceasing roll of thunder, now near, now rumbling along in distant volleys, swelled the wild uproar, and helped to make up a scene of grand but desolate meaning.

What could well be drearier than that little line of cabins that formed the village of Kilkieran, as with strongly barricaded doors, and with roofs secured by ropes and spars, they stood exposed to the full violence of the wild Atlantic! Not a man, not a living thing was to be seen. The fishermen were all within doors, cowering in gloomy indolence over the scanty turf fires, and brooding darkly on the coming winter.

With a thorough conviction of all the dreariness of this scene, Mr. Merl stood at the window and looked out. He had been all his life too actively engaged in his pursuits of one kind or other to know much about what is called "being bored." Let rain fall ever so heavily, a cab could take him down to "'Change"—the worst weather never marred a sale of stock, and Consols could rise even while the mercury was falling. The business-life of a great city seems to care little for weather, and possibly they whose intent faculties are bent on gain, scarcely remember whether the sun shines upon their labours.

Merl felt differently now: the scene before him was wilder and gloomier than anything he had ever beheld. Beyond and behind the village, steep mountains rose on every side, of barren and rugged surface—not a vestige of any culture to be seen; while on the road which led along a narrow gorge, nothing moved. All was dreary and deserted.

"I suppose you'll keep the roof over you to-day, Mr. Merl?" said Scanlan, as he entered the room, buttoned up to the chin in a coarse frieze coat, while his head was protected by a genuine "sou'-wester" of oilskin.

"And are *you* going out in such weather?" asked Merl.

"'Needs must,' sir, as the proverb says. I have to be at the assizes at Oughterard this morning, to prosecute some scoundrels for cutting brambles in the wood; and I want to serve notices on a townland about eight miles from this; and then I'll have to go round by Cro' Martin and see Miss Mary. That's not the worst of it," added he, with an impudent leer, "for she's a fine girl, and has the prettiest eyes in the kingdom."

"I have a letter for her," said Merl—"a letter of introduction from Captain Martin. I suppose I might as well send it by you, and ask if I might pay my respects, to-morrow or next day?"

"To be sure; I'll take it with pleasure. You'll like her when you see her. She's not a bit like the rest: no pride, no stand-off—that is, when she takes a fancy; but she is full of life and courage for anything."

"Ah, yes—the captain said we should get on very well together," drawled out Merl.

"Did he though!" cried Scanlan eagerly. Then as suddenly checking his anxiety, he added, "But what does *he* know about Miss Mary? surely they're as good as strangers to each other. And for the matter of that, even when he was here, they didn't take to each other—she was always laughing at the way he rode."

"Wasn't he in the dragoons?" asked Merl, in a half-rebutting tone.

"So he was; but what does that signify? Sure it's not a cavalry seat, with your head down and your elbows squared, will teach you to cross country—at least, with Mary Martin beside you. You'll see her one of these days yourself, Mr. Merl. May I never, if you don't see her now!" cried Scanlan, suddenly, as he pointed to the road, along which a horse was seen coming at speed, the rider breasting the storm fearlessly, and only crouching to the saddle as the gusts swept past. "What in the name of all that's wonderful brings her here?" cried Maurice. "She wasn't down at Kilkieran for four months."

"She'll stop at this inn here, I suppose?" said Merl, who was already performing an imaginary toilet for her visit.

"You may take your oath she'll not!" said Scanlan, half roughly; "she'd not cross the threshold of it! She's going to some cabin or other. There she goes—isn't that riding?" cried he in animation. "Did you ever see a horse held neater? And see how she picks the road for him. Easy as she's sitting, she'd take a four-foot wall this minute, without stirring in her saddle."

"She hasn't got a nice day for pleasuring!" said the Jew, with a vulgar cackle.

"If ye call it pleasure," rejoined Scanlan, "what she's after; but I suspect there's somebody sick down at the end of the village. There, I'm right; she's pulling up at Mat Landy's—I wonder if it's old Mat is bad."

"You know him?" asked Merl.

"To be sure I do. He's known down the coast for forty miles. He saved more men from shipwreck himself than everybody in the barony put together; but his heart is all but broke about a granddaughter that ran away. Sure enough, she's going in there."

"Did you see Miss Mary?" cried Crow, entering suddenly. "She's just gone down the beach. They say there's a case now down there."

"A case—of what?" said Merl.

"Cholera or typhus, as it may be," said Crow, not a little surprised at the unmistakable terror of the other's face.

"And she's gone to see it!" exclaimed the Jew.

"To do more than see it. She'll nurse the sick man, and bring him medicine and whatever he wants."

"And not afraid?"

"Afraid!" broke in Crow. "I'd like to know what she's afraid of. Ask Mr. Scanlan what would frighten her." But Mr. Scanlan had already slipped noiselessly from the room, and was already on his way down the shore.

"Well," said Merl, lighting his cigar, and drawing an armchair close to the fire, "I don't see the advantage of all that. She could send the doctor, I suppose, and make her servants take down to these people whatever she wanted to send them.

What especial utility there is in going herself, I can't perceive."

"I'll tell you, then," said Crow. "It's more likely the doctor is busy this minute, ten or fifteen miles away—for the whole country is down in sickness; but even if he wasn't, if it were not for her courage in going everywhere, braving danger and death every hour, there would be a general flight of all that could escape. They'd rush into the towns—where already there's more sickness than they know how to deal with. She encourages some—she shames more; and not a few are proud to be brave in such company, for she is an angel—that's her name—an angel."

"Well, I should like to see her," drawled out Merl, as he smoothed down his scrubby mustachios.

"Nothing easier, then," rejoined Crow. "Put on your coat and hat, and we'll stroll down the beach till she comes out; it can't be very long, for she has enough on her hands elsewhere."

The proposition of a "stroll" in such weather was very little to Mr. Merl's taste; but his curiosity was stronger than even his fear of a drenching, and having muffled and shawled himself as if for an Arctic winter, they set out together from the inn.

"And you tell me," said he, "that the Martins used to live here—actually pass their lives in this atrocious climate?"

"That they did—and the worst mistake they ever made was to leave it," said Crow.

"I confess you puzzle me," said Merl.

"Very possibly I do, sir," was the calm reply; "but you'd have understood me at once had you known this country while they resided at Cro' Martin. It wasn't only that the superfluities of their wealth ran over, and filled the cup of the poor man, but there was a sense of hope cherished, by seeing, that, however hard the times, however adverse the season, there was always 'his Honor,' as they called Mr. Martin, whom they could appeal to for aid, or for lenient treatment."

"Very strange—very odd, all this," said Merl, musing. "But all that I hear of Ireland represents the people as if in a continual struggle for mere existence, and actually in a daily state of dependence on the will of somebody above them."

"And if that same condition were never to be exaggerated into downright want, or pushed to an actual slavery, we could be very happy with it," said Crow, "and not thank you, or any other Englishman that came here, to disturb it."

"I assure you I have no ambition to indulge in any such interference," said Merl, with a half-contemptuous laugh.

"And so you're not thinking of settling in Ireland?" asked Crow, in some surprise.

"Never dreamed of it!"

"Well, the story goes that you wanted to buy an estate, and came down to have a look at this property here."

"I'd not live on it if Martin were to make me a present of it to-morrow."

"I don't think he will," said Crow, gravely. "I am afraid he couldn't, if he wished it."

"What, do you mean on account of the entail?" asked Merl.

"Not exactly." He paused, and after some silence said, "If the truth were told, there's a great deal of debt on this property—more than any one suspects."

"The captain's encumbrances?" asked Merl, eagerly.

"His grandfather's and his great-grandfather's! As for the present man, they say that he's tied up some way not to sell, except for the sake of redeeming some of the mortgages. But who knows what is true and what is false about all this?"

Merl was silent; grave fears were crossing his mind how far his claims were valid; and terrible misgivings shot across him lest the captain might have been paying him with valueless securities.

"I gather from what you say," said he, at last, "that it would be rather difficult to make out a title for any purchaser of this estate."

"Don't be afraid of that, sir. They'll make you out a fair title."

"I tell you again, I'd not take it as a present," said Merl, half angrily.

"I see," said Crow, nodding his head sententiously. And then fixing his eyes steadily on him, he said, "You are a mortgagee."

Merl reddened—partly anger, partly shame. Indeed, the feeling that such a capacity as Mr. Crow's should have pushed him hard, was anything but complimentary to his self-esteem.

"I don't want to pry into any man's affairs," said Crow, easily. "Heaven knows, it's mighty little matter to Simmy Crow who lives in the big house there. I'd rather, if I had my choice, be able to walk the wood with my sketch-book and brushes, than be the richest man that ever was heartsore with the cares of wealth."

"And if a friend—a sincere, well-wishing friend—were to bind himself that you should enjoy this same happiness you speak of, Mr. Crow, what would you do in return?"

"Anything he asked me—anything, at least, that a fair man could ask, and an honest one could do."

"There's my hand on it, then," said Merl, "It's a bargain."

"Ay, but let us hear the conditions," said Crow. "What could I possibly serve you in, that would be worth this price?"

"Simply this: that you'll answer all my inquiries, so far as you know about this estate; and where your knowledge fails, that you'll endeavour to obtain the information for me."

"Maybe I could tell you nothing at all—or next to nothing," said Crow. "Just ask me, now, what's the kind of question you'd put, for to tell truth, I'm not over bright or clever—the best of me is when I've a canvas before me."

Merl peered stealthily at the speaker over the great folds of the shawl that enveloped his throat; he was not without his misgivings that the artist was a "deep fellow," assuming a manner of simplicity to draw him into a confidence. "And yet," he thought, "had he really been shrewd and cunning, he'd never have blurted out his suspicion as to my being a mortgagee. Besides," said he to himself, "there, and with that fact, must end all his knowledge of me."—"You can dine with me to-day, Mr. Crow, can't you?"

"I'm engaged to the stranger in No. 4—the man I'm making the drawings for."

"But you could get off. You could ask him to excuse you by saying that something of importance required you elsewhere?"

"And dine in the room underneath?" asked Crow, with a comical look of distress at this suggestion.

"Well, let us go somewhere else. Is there no other inn in the neighbourhood?"

"There's a small public-house near the gate of Cro' Martin, to be sure."

"Then we'll dine there. I'll order a chaise at four o'clock, and we'll drive over together. And now, I'll just return to the house, for this wading here is not much to my taste."

Mr. Merl returned gloomily to the house, his mind too deeply occupied with his own immediate interests to bestow any thought upon Mary Martin. The weather assuredly offered but little inducement to linger out of doors, for, as the morning wore on, the rain and wind increased in violence, while vast masses of mist swept over the sea and were carried on shore, leaving only, at intervals, little patches of the village to be seen—dreary, storm-beaten, and desolate! Merl shuddered, as he cast one last look at this sad-coloured picture, and entered the inn.

Has it ever been your ill-fortune, good reader, to find yourself alone in some dreary, unfrequented spot, the weather-bound denizen of a sorry inn, without books or newspapers, thrown upon the resources of your own thoughts, so sure to take their colour from the dreary scene around them? It is a trying ordeal for the best of tempers. Your man of business chafes and frets against the inactivity—your man of leisure sorrows over monotony that makes idleness a penalty. He whose thoroughfare in life is the pursuit of wealth thinks of all those more fortunate than himself then hurrying on to gain, while he who is the mark of the world's flatteries and attentions laments over the dismal desolation of an uncompanionable existence.

If Mr. Merl did not exactly occupy any one of these categories, he fancied at least that he oscillated amidst them all. It was, indeed, his good pleasure to imagine himself a "man upon town," who played a little, discounted a little, dealt a little in old pictures, old china, old cabinets, and old plate, but all for mere pastime—something, as he would say, "to give him an interest in it"—and there, certainly, he was right. Nothing so surely imparted an "interest" in Mr. Merl's eyes as having an investment. Objects of art, the greatest triumphs of genius, landscape the richest eye ever ranged over, political events that would have awakened a sense of patriotism in the dullest and coldest, all came before him as simple questions of profit and loss.

If he was not actually a philosopher, some of his views of life were characterized by great shrewdness. He had remarked, for instance, that the changeful fashions of the world are ever alternating; and that not only dress, and costume, and social customs undergo mutations, but that objects of positive sterling value are liable to the same wayward influences. We are all modern to-day, to-morrow we may be "Louis Quatorse," the next day "Cinque Centi" in our tastes. Now we are mad after Italian art, yesterday the Dutch school was in vogue. Our galleries, our libraries, our houses, our gardens, all feel the caprices of these passing moods. There was but one thing that Mr. Merl had perceived never changed, and that was the estimation men felt for money. Religions might decay, and states crumble, thrones totter and kings be exiled, Cuyps might be depreciated and marqueterie be held in mean esteem, but gold was always within a fraction at least of four pounds eleven shillings the ounce!

He remarked, too, that men gradually grow tired of almost everything: the pursuits of the young are not those of the middle-aged, still less of advanced life. The books which we once cried over are now thrown down with languor; the society we imagined perfection we now smile at for its very absurdities. We see vulgarity where we once beheld vigour; we detect exaggeration where we used to attribute power. There is only one theme of which our estimation never varies—wealth! Mr. Merl had never yet met the man nor the woman who really despised it; nay he had seen kings trafficking on 'Change. He had known great ministers deep speculators on the Bourse; valiant admirals, distinguished generals, learned judges, and even divines, had bought and sold with him, all eager in the pursuit of gain, and all employing, to the best of their ability, the high faculties of their intelligence to assist them in making crafty bargains.

If these experiences taught him the universal veneration men feel for wealth, they also conveyed another lesson, which was, the extreme gullibility of mankind. He met every day men who ruled cabinets and commanded fleets—the reputed great of the earth—and saw them easier victims in his hand than the commonest capacity in "Leadenhall-street." They had the earliest information, but could not profit by it; they never understood the temper on 'Change, knew nothing of the variations of the money-barometer, and invariably fell into snares that your city man never incurred. Hence Mr. Merl came to conceive a very low general opinion of what he himself called "the swells," and a very high one of Herman Merl.

If we have dwelt upon these traits of this interesting individual in this place, it is simply to place before our reader's mind the kind of lucubrations such a man might be disposed to indulge in. In fact, story-tellers like ourselves have very little pretension to go beyond the narrow limit; and having given to the reader the traits of a character, they must leave their secret working more or less to his ingenuity. So much, however, we are at liberty to declare, that Mr. Merl was terribly bored, and made no scruple of confessing it.

"What the deuce are you staring at? Is there anything really to be seen in that confounded dreary sea?" cried he, as

Crow stood shading his eyes from the lightning flashes, and intently gazing on the scene without.

"That's one of the effects Backhuysen was so fond of!" exclaimed Crow, eagerly—"a sullen sea, lead-coloured and cold, with a white curl just crisping the top of the waves, over it a dreary expanse of dark sky, low-lying and black, till you come near the horizon, where there is a faint line of greyish white, just enough to show that you are on the wide, wide ocean, out of sight of land, and nothing living near, except that solitary sea-gull perched upon the breakers there. There's real poetry in a bit like that; it sets one a thinking over the desolation of those whose life is a little better than a voyage on such a sea!"

"Better be drowned at once," broke in Merl, impatiently.

Crow started and looked at him, and had Merl but seen that glance, so scornful and contemptuous was it, even his self-esteem might have felt outraged. But he had not remarked it, and as little did he guess what was then passing in the poor artist's mind, as Crow muttered to himself, "I know one that will not be your guest to-day, if he dines on a cold potato, or doesn't dine at all."

"Did I tell you," cried he, suddenly, "that there's no horses to be had?"

"No horses!" exclaimed Merl, "how so?"

"There's a great trial going on at the assizes to-day, and Mr. Barry is gone on to Oughterard to hear it, and he has the only pair of posters in the place."

"What a confounded hole!" burst out Merl, passionately "That I ever should have set my foot in it. How are we to get through the day here? Have you thought of anything to be done?"

"*I'll* go down and find out how poor Landy is," said Crow, "for Miss Mary's horse is still at the door, and he must be very bad indeed, or she wouldn't delay so long."

"And what if it should turn out the cholera, or typhus, or something as bad?"

"Well?" said Crow, interrogatively, for he could not guess the drift of the suggestion.

"Simply this, my worthy friend," resumed Merl, "that I have no fancy for the pleasure of your company at dinner after such an excursion as you speak of."

"I was just going to say that myself," said Crow. "Good-by!" And before Merl could interpose a word, he was gone.

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. MERL'S MEDITATIONS.

Our last chapter left Mr. Herman Merl in bad company—he was alone. Now, very few men's thoughts are companionable in the dreary solitude of a sorry inn. None of us, it is to be feared, are totally exempt from "this world's crosses;" and though the sorrows of life do fall very unequally, the light afflictions are accepted as very heavy burdens by those to whose lot they fall!

Just as it happens, then, on some gloomy day of winter, when we have "finished our book," and the newspapers are tiresome, we take the opportunity to look through our letters and papers—to arrange our desk, and put a little order in our scattered and littered memoranda,—somewhat in the same spirit will Conscience grasp a similar moment to go over the past, glance at bygone events, and make, as it were, a clearance of whatever weighs upon our memory. I'm not quite certain that the best of us come out of this Bankruptcy Court with a first-class certificate. Even the most merciful to his own errors will acknowledge that in many things he should do differently were they to be done over again; and he must, indeed, have fallen upon a happy lot in life who has not some self-reproach on the score of kindness unrequited—slight injuries either unforgiven or unequally avenged—friendships jeopardised, mayhap lost, by some mere indulgence of temper—and enmities unreconciled, just for lack of the veriest sacrifice of self-love.

Were there any such court in morals as in law, what a sad spectacle would our schedule show, and how poor—even the most solvent amongst us—if called on for a list of his liabilities!

Lest our moralising should grow uncomfortable, dear reader, let us return to Mr. Merl, now occupied, as he was, in this same process of self-examination. He sat with a little note-book before him, recalling various incidents of the past; and if the lowering expression of his face might be trusted, his reveries were not rose-coloured, and yet, as he turned over the pages, it might be seen that moments of gratulation alternated with the intervals of self-reproach.

"Wednesday, the 10th," muttered he to himself, "dined at Philippe's—supped with Arkright and Bailey—whist at double Nap. points—won four hundred and ten—might have made it a thousand, but B. flung the cards out of the window in a passion, and had to cease playing.

"Thursday—toothache—stayed at home, and played piquet with myself—discovered two new combinations, in taking in cards—Irving came to see me—won from him twenty pounds his mother had just sent him.

"Friday—a good day's work—walked into Martin for two thousand seven hundred, and took his bill at three months, with promise to renew—dined with Sitwell, and sold him my Perugino for six hundred—cost myself not as many francs—am to have the refusal of all Vanderbrett's cabinets for letting him off his match with Columbine, which, by the way, he was sure to win, as Mope is dead lame.

"Martin again—Saturday—came to have his revenge, but seemed quarrelsome, so I affected an engagement, and declined play.

"Sunday—gave him his revenge, to the tune of twelve hundred in my own favour—'Lansquenet' in the evening at his rooms—several swells present—thought it prudent to drop some tin, and so, lost one hundred and forty Naps.—Sir Giles Bruce the chief winner—rich, and within two months of being of age.

"Monday—the Perugino returned as a bad copy by Fava—took it at once, and said I was taken in myself—Sitwell so pleased that he sat down to écarté, and lost two hundred to me. I dine with him to-morrow.

"Tuesday—blank—dinner at Sitwell's—met Colonel Cardle, whom I saw at Hombourg, and so refused to play. It was, I suspect, a plant of Sitwell's to pit us against each other.

"Wednesday—sold out my African at seventy-one and an eighth—realised well, and bought in Poyais, which will rise for at least ten days to come—took Canchard's château at Ghent for his old debt at écarté—don't like it, as it may be talked about.

"Gave a dinner to Wilson, Morris, Leader, Whyte, and Martin—Lescour couldn't come—played little whist afterwards—changed for hazard after supper—won a few Naps., and home to bed.

"Took Rigby's curricle and horses for the two hundred he owes me—glad to have done with him—he evidently wanted a row—and so play with him no more.

"Sent ten Naps. to the fund for the poor injured by the late inundations, as the police called to ask about my passport, &c.

"Saturday—the Curé of St. Rochette, to ask for alms—gave three hundred francs, and secured his services against the police—the curé mentions some curious drawings in the sacristy—promised to go and see them.

"Bought Walrond's library for a franc a volume—the Elzivirs alone worth double the amount paid—Bailey bolted, and so lose his last bills—Martin quarrelsome—said he never yet won at any sitting with me—lost seventy to him, and sent him home satisfied.

"Gave five hundred francs for the drawings at St. R.—abominable daubs, but the police grow more troublesome every day—besides, Crowthorpe is collecting early studies of Rembrandt—these sketches are marked R.

"A great evening—cleared Martin out—suspect that this night's work makes me an Irish estated gentleman— must obtain legal opinion as to these same Irish securities and post-obits, involving, as they do, a heavy sum."

Mr. Merl paused at this *entrée* in his diary, and began to reflect in no very gratulatory mood on the little progress he had as yet made in this same object of inquiry; in fact, he was just discovering, what a vast number of more shrewd observers than himself have long since found out, that exploring in Ireland is rather tough work. Everything looks so easy, and simple, and plain upon the surface, and yet is so puzzling and complicated beneath; all seems so intelligible, where there is nothing in reality that is not a contradiction. It is true he was not harassing himself with problems of labour and wages, the condition of the people, the effects of emigration, and so forth. He wanted to ascertain some few facts as to the value of a certain estate, and what encumbrances it might be charged with; and to the questions he put on this head, every reply was an insinuated interrogatory to himself. "Why are *you* here, Mr. Merl?" "How does it concern *you?*" "What may be *your* interest in the same investigation?" This peculiar dialectic met him as he landed; it followed him to the west. Scanlan, the landlord, even that poor simpleton the painter—as he called Crow—had submitted him to its harsh rule, till Mr. Merl felt that, instead of pursuing an examination, he was himself everlastingly in the witness-box.

Wearied of these speculations, dissatisfied with himself and his fruitless journey, he summoned the landlord to ask if that "old gent" above stairs had not a book of some kind, or a newspaper, he could lend him. A ragged urchin speedily returned with a key in his hand, saying, "That's the key of No. 4. Joe says you may go up and search for yourself."

One more scrupulous might not exactly have fancied the office thus suggested to him. He, however, was rather pleased with the investigation, and, having satisfied himself that the mission was safe, set forth to fulfil it. No. 4, as the stranger's room was called, was a large and lofty chamber, lighted by a single bay-window, the deep recess of which was occupied by a writing-table. Books, maps, letters, and drawings littered every part of the room; costly weapons, too, such as richly-chased daggers and inlaid pistols lay carelessly about, with curiously-shaped pipes and gold-embroidered tobacco-bags; a richly-lined fur pelisse covered the sofa, and a skull-cap of the very finest sable lay beside it. All these were signs of affluence and comfort, and Mr. Merl pondered over them as he went from place to place, tossing over one thing after another, and losing himself in wild conjectures about the owner.

The writing-table, we have said, was thickly strewn with letters, and to these he now addressed himself in all form, taking his seat comfortably for the investigation. Many of the letters were in foreign languages, and from remote and far-away lands. Some he was enabled to spell out, but they referred to places and events he had never heard of, and were filled with allusions he could not fathom. At length, however, he came to documents which interested him more closely. They were notes, most probably in the stranger's own hand, of his late tour along the coast. Mournful records were they all—sad stories of destitution and want, a whole people struck down by famine and sickness, and a land perishing in utter misery. No personal narrative broke the dreary monotony of these gloomy records, and Merl searched in vain for what might give a clue to the writer's station or his object. Carefully drawn-up statistics, tables of the varying results of emigration, notes upon the tenure of land and the price of labour were all there, interspersed with replies from different quarters to researches of the writer's making. Numerous appeals to charity, entreaties for small loans of money, were mingled with grateful acknowledgments for benefits already received. There was much, had he been so minded, that Mr. Merl might have learned in this same unauthorised inquiry. There were abundant traits of the people displayed, strange insight into customs and ways peculiar to them, accurate knowledge, too, of the evils of their social condition, and, above all, there were the evidences of that curious compound of credulity and distrust, hope and fatalism, energy and inertness, which make up the Irish nature.

He threw these aside, however, as themes that had no interest for him. What had he to do with the people? His care was with the soil, and less even with it than with its burdens and encumbrances. One conviction certainly did impress itself strongly upon him—that he'd part with his claims on the estate for almost anything, in preference to himself assuming the cares and duties of an Irish landlord—a position which he summed up by muttering to himself, "is simply to have so many acres of bad land, with the charge of feeding so many thousands of bad people." Here were suggestions, it is true, how to make them better, coupled with details that showed the writer to be one well acquainted with the difficulties of his task; here, also, were dark catalogues of crime, showing how destitution and vice went hand in hand, and that the seasons of suffering were those of lawlessness and violence. Various hands were detectable in these documents. Some evinced the easy style and graceful penmanship of education; others were written in the gnarled hand of the daily labourer. Many of these were underlined in what Merl soon detected to be the stranger's own handwriting; and brief as such remarks were, they sufficed to show how carefully their contents had been studied by him.

"What could be the object of all this research? Was he some emissary of the Government, sent expressly to obtain this knowledge? Was he employed by some section of party politicians, or was he one of those literary philanthropists who trade upon the cheap luxury of pitying the poor and detailing their sorrows? At all events," thought Mr. Merl, "this same information seems to have cost him considerable research, and not a little money: and as I am under a pledge to give the captain some account of his dear country, here is a capital opportunity to do so, not only with ease, but actually with honour." And having formed this resolve, he instantly proceeded to its execution. That wonderful little note-book, with its strong silver clasps, so full of strange and curious information, was now produced; but he soon saw that the various facts to be recorded demanded a wider space, and so he set himself to write down on a loose sheet of paper notices of the land in tillage or in pasture, the numerical condition of the people as compared with former years, their state, their prospects; but when he came to tell of the ravages made and still making by pestilence amongst them, he actually stopped to re-read the records, so terrible and astounding were the facts narrated. A dreadful malady walked the land, and its victims lay in every house! The villages were depopulated, the little clusters of houses at cross-roads were stricken, the lone shealing on the mountain side, the miserable cottage of the dreary moor, were each the scenes of desolation and death. It was as though the land were about to be devastated, and the race of man swept from its surface! As he read on, he came upon some strictures in the stranger's own hand upon these sad events, and perceived how terribly had the deserted, neglected state of the people aided the fatal course of the epidemic. No hospitals had been provided, no stores of any remedial kind, not a doctor for miles around, save an old physician who had been retained at Miss Martin's special charge, and who was himself nigh exhausted by the fatigue of his office.

Mr. Merl laid down his pen to think—not, indeed, in any compassionate spirit of that suffering people; his sorrows were not for those who lay on beds of want and sickness; his whole anxiety was for a certain person very dear to his own heart, who had rashly accepted securities on a property which, to all seeming, was verging upon ruin; this conviction being strongly impressed by the lawless state of the country, and the hopelessness of expecting payment from a tenantry so circumstanced.

"Sympathy, indeed!" cried he; "I should like to hear of a little sympathy for the unlucky fellow who has accepted a mortgage on this confounded estate! These wretched creatures have little to lose—and even death itself ought to be no unwelcome relief to a life like theirs—but to a man such as I am, with abundance of projects for his spare cash, this is a pretty investment! It is not impossible that this philanthropic stranger, whoever he be, might buy up my bonds. He should have them a bargain—ay, by Jove! I'd take off a jolly percentage to touch the 'ready;' and who knows, what with all his benevolence, his charity, and his Christian kindliness, if he'd not come down handsomely to rescue this unhappy people from the hands of a Jew!"

And Mr. Merl laughed pleasantly, for the conceit amused him, and it sounded gratefully to his imagination that even his faith could be put out to interest, and the tabernacle be turned to good account. The noise of a chaise approaching at a sharp trot along the shingly beach startled him from his musings, and he had barely time to snatch up the paper on which he had scrawled his notes, and hasten down stairs, when the obsequious landlord, rushing to the door, ushered in Mr. Barry, and welcomed him back again.

Merl suffered his door to stand ajar, that he might take a look at the stranger as he passed. He was a very large, powerfully-built man, somewhat stooped by age, but showing even in advanced years signs of a vigorous frame and stout constitution; his head was massive, and covered with snow white hair, which descended on the back of his neck; his countenance must in youth have been handsome, and even yet bore the expression of a frank, generous, but somewhat impetuous nature—so at least it struck him who now observed it—a character not improbably aided by his temper as he entered, for he had returned from scenes of misery and suffering, and was in a mood of indignation at the neglect he had just witnessed.

"You said truly," said he to the landlord; "you told me I shouldn't see a gentleman for twenty miles round, that all had fled and left the people to their fate, and I see now it is a fact."

"Faix, and no wonder," answered the host; "wet potatoes and the shaking ague, not to speak of cholera morbus, isn't great inducements to stay and keep company with. I'd be off too, if I had the means."

"But I spoke of gentlemen, sir," said the stranger, with a strong emphasis on the word—"men who should be the first to prove their birth and blood when a season of peril was near."

"Thrue for you, sir," chimed in Joe, who suddenly detected the blunder he had committed. "The Martins ought not to have run away in the middle of our distress."

"They left the ship in a storm, they'll find a sorry wreck when they return to it," muttered the stranger, as he ascended the stairs.

"By Jacob! just what I suspected," said Merl to himself, while he closed the door; "this property won't be worth sixpence, and I am regularly 'done.'"

CHAPTER XLII.

A NIGHT OF STORM.

The curtains were closely drawn, and a cheerful turf fire blazed in the room where Mr. Merl sat at dinner. The fare was excellent, and, and even rustic cookery sufficed to make fresh salmon, and mountain mutton, and fat woodcocks delectable; while the remains of Mr. Scanlan's hamper set forth some choice Madeira and several bottles of Sneyd's claret. Nor was he for whose entainment these good things were provided in any way incapable of enjoying them. With the peculiar sensuality of his race, he loved his dinner all to himself, and alone. He delighted in the privileged selfishness that isolation conferred, and he revelled in a sort of complacent flattery at the thought of all the people who were dining worse than himself, and the stray thousands besides who were not destined on that day to dine at all.

The self-caressing shudder that came over him as the sound of a horse at speed on the shore outside was heard, spoke plainly as words themselves the pleasant comparison that crossed his mind between the condition of the rider and his own. He drew nearer the fire, he threw on a fresh log of pine, and, filling up a bumper, seemed to linger as he viewed it, as though wishing health and innumerable blessings to Mr. Herman Merl.

The noise of the clattering hoofs died away in distance and in the greater uproar of the storm, and Mr. Merl thought no more of them. How often happens it, dear reader, that some brief interruption flashes through our seasons of enjoyment; we are starled, perhaps; we even need a word or two to reassure us that all is well, and then the work of pleasure goes on, and we forget that it had ever been retarded; and yet, depend upon it, in that fleeting second of time some sad episode of human life has, like a spectre, crossed our path, and some deep sorrow gone wearily past us.

Let us follow that rider, then, who now, quitting the bleak shore, has entered a deep gorge between the mountain; the rain swept along in torrents—the wind in fitful gusts dashes the mountain stream in many a wayward shape, and snaps the stem of old trees in pieces—landslips and broken rocks impede the way, and yet that brave horse holds ever onward, now stretching to a fast gallop, now gathering himself to clear some foaming torrent, or some fragment of fallen timber.

The night is so dark that the rider cannot see the horse's length in advance; but every feature of the way is well known, and an instinctive sense of the peril to be apprehended at each particular spot guides that hand and nerves that heart. Mary Martin—for she it is—had ridden that same path at all seasons and all hours, but never on a wilder night, nor through a more terrible hurricane than this. At moments her speed relaxed, as if to breathe her horse; and twice she pulled up short, to listen and distinguish between the sound of thunder and the crashing noise of rocks rolling from the mountain. There was a sublimity in the scene, lit up at moments by the lightning; and a sense of peril, too, that exalted the adventurous spirit of the girl, and imparted to her heart a high heroic feeling. The glorious sentiment of confronting danger animated and excited her; and her courage rose with each new difficulty of the way, till her very brain seemed to reel with the wild transport of her emotions.

As she emerged from the gorge she gained a high table-land, over which the wind swept unimpeded. Not a cliff, not a rock, not a tree, broke the force of the gale, which raged with all the violence of a storm at sea. Crouching low upon the saddle—stooping at times to the mane—she could barely make way against the hurricane; and more than once her noble charger was driven backward, and forced to turn his back to the storm. *Her* courage never failed. Taking advantage of every passing lull, she dashed forward, ready to wheel and halt when the wind shot past with violence. Descending at last from this elevated "plateau," she again entered a deep cleft between the mountain, the road littered with fallen earth and branches of trees, so as almost to defy a passage. After traversing upwards of a mile of this wearisome way, she arrived at the door of a small cabin, the first trace of habitation since she had quitted the village. It was a mere hovel, abutting against a rock, and in its dreary solitude seemed the last refuge of direst poverty.

She bent down from her saddle to look in at the window; but, except some faint embers on the hearth, all was dark within. She then knocked with her whip against the door, and called Morris two or three times; but no reply was given. Springing from her horse, Mary fastened the bridle to the hasp of the door-post, and entered. The heavy breathing of one in deep sleep at once caught her attention, and, approaching the fireplace, she lighted a piece of pine-wood to examine about her. On a low settle in one corner lay the figure of a young woman, whose pale, pinched features contrasted strongly with the bright ribbons of her cap floating loosely at either side. Mary tottered as she drew nigher; a terrible sense of fear was over her—a terror of she knew not what. She held the flickering flame closer, and saw that she was dead! Poor Margaret, she had been one of Mary's chief favourites; the very cap that now decked her cold forehead was Mary's wedding-gift to her. But a few days before, her little child had been carried to the churchyard; and it was said that the mother never held up her head after. Sick almost to fainting, Mary Martin sank into a chair, and then saw, for the first time, the figure of a man, who, half kneeling, lay with his head on the foot of the bed, fast asleep! Weariness, utter exhaustion, were marked in his pale-worn features, while his attitude bespoke complete prostration. His hand still clasped a little rosary.

It seemed but the other day that she had wished them "joy" upon their wedding, and they had gone home to their little cabin in hopefulness and high-hearted spirit, and there she lay now a cold corpse, and he, bereaved and childless. What a deal of sad philosophy do these words reveal! What dark contrasts do we bring up when we say, "It was but the other day." It was but "the other day," and Cro' Martin was the home of one whose thriving tenantry reflected back all his efforts for their welfare, when movement and occupation bespoke a condition of activity and cheerful industry; when, even in their poverty, the people bore bravely up, and the cases of suffering but sufficed to call out traits of benevolence and kind feeling. It was but "the other day," and Mary herself rode out amidst the people, like some beloved Sovereign in the middle of her subjects; happy faces beamed brighter when she came, and even misery half forgot itself in her presence. But "the other day," and the flag waved proudly from the great tower, to show that Cro' Martin was the residence of its owner, and Mary the life and soul of all that household!

Suchlike were her thoughts as she stood still gazing on the sad scene before her. She could not bring herself to awaken the poor fellow, who thus, perchance, stole a short respite from his sorrows; but leaving some money beside him on a chair, and taking one farewell look of poor Margaret, she stole silently away, and remounted her horse.

Again she is away through the storm and the tempest! Her pace is now urged to speed, for she knows every field and every fence, where to press her horse to his gallop, where, to spare and husband his strength. At one moment she steals carefully along amid fragments of fallen rocks and broken timber; at another, she flies, with racing speed, over the smooth sward. At length, through the gloom and darkness, the tall towers of Cro' Martin are seen over the deep woods; but her horse's head is not turned thitherward. No; she had taken another direction, and, skirting the wall of the demesne, she is off towards the wild, bleak country beyond. It is past midnight; not a light gleams from a cabin window as she dashes past; all is silent save the plashing rain, which, though the wind has abated, continues to fall in torrents. Crossing the bleak moor, whose yawning pits even in daylight suggest care and watchfulness, she gains the foot of the barren mountain on which Barnagheela stands, and descries in the distance the flickering of a light dimly traceable through the falling rain.

For the first time her horse shows signs of fatigue, and Mary caresses him with her hand, and speaks encouragingly to him as she slackens her pace, ascending the hill at a slow walk. After about half an hour of this toilsome progress, for the surface is stony and rock-covered, she reaches the little "boreen" road which forms the approach to the house. Mary has never been there before, and advances now slowly and carefully between two rude walls of dry masonry which lead to the hall-door. As she nears the house, the gleam of lights from between the ill-closed shutters attract her, and suddenly, through the swooping rain, come the sounds of several voices in tones of riot and revelry. She listens; and it is now the rude burst of applause that breaks forth—a din of voices loudly proclaiming the hearty approval of some sentiment or opinion.

While she halts to determine what course next to follow—for these signs of revelry have disconcerted her—she hears a rough, loud voice from within call out, "There's another toast you must drink now, and fill for it to the brim. Come, Peter Hayes, no skulking; the liquor is good, and the sentiment the same. Gentlemen, you came here to-night to honour my poor house—my ancestral house, I may call it—on the victory we've gained over tyranny and oppression." Loud cheers here interrupted him, but he resumed: "They tried—by the aid of the law that they made themselves—to turn me out of my house and home. They did all that false swearing and forged writing could do, to drive *me*—me, Tom Magennis, the last of an ancient stock—out upon the highways." (Groans from the hearers.) "But they failed—ay, gentlemen, they failed. Old Repton, with all his skill, and Scanlan, with all his treachery, couldn't do it. Joe Nelligan, like Goliath—no, like David, I mean—put a stone between their two eyes, and laid them low." (Loud cheering, and cries of "Why isn't he here?" "Where is he to-night?") "Ay, gentlemen," resumed the speaker, "ye may well ask where is he this night? when we are celebrating not only our triumph, but his; for it was the first brief he ever held—the first guinea he ever touched for a fee! I'll tell you where he is. Skulking—ay, that's the word for it—skulking in Oughterard—hiding himself for shame because he beat the Martins!" (Loud expressions of anger, and some of dissent, here broke forth; some inveighing against this cowardice, others defending him against the charge.) "Say what you like," roared Magennis, "I know, and he knows that I know it. What was it he said when Mahony went to him with my brief? 'I'll not refuse to undertake the case,' said he, 'but I'll not lend myself to any scurrilous attack upon the family at Cro' Martin!'" (Groans.) "Ay, but listen," continued he: "'And if I find,' said he—'if I find that in the course of the case such an attempt should be made, I'll throw down my brief, though I never should hold another.' There's Joe Nelligan for you! There's the stuff you thought you'd make a Patriot out of!"

"Say what you like, Tom Magennis, he's a credit to the town," said old Hayes, "and he won your cause this day against one of the 'cutest of the Dublin counsellors."

"He did so, sir," resumed Magennis, "and he got his pay, and there's nothing between us; and I told him so, and more besides; for I said, "You may flatter them and crawl to them; you may be as servile as a serpent or a boa-constrictor to them; but take *my* word for it, Mister Joe—or Counsellor Nelligan, if you like it better—they'll never forget who and what you are—the son of old Dan there, of the High-street—and you've a better chance to be the Chief Justice than the husband of Mary Martin!'"

"You told him that!" cried several together.

"I did, sir; and I believe for a minute he meant to strike me; he got pale with passion, and then he got red—blood red; and, in that thick way he has when he's angry, he said, 'Whatever may be my hopes of the Bench, I'll not win my way to it by ever again undertaking the cause of a ruffian!' 'Do you mean *me?*' said I—'do you mean *me?*' But he turned away into the house, and I never saw him since. If it hadn't been for Father Neal there, I'd have had him out for it, sir!"

"We've other work before us than quarrelling amongst ourselves," said the bland voice of Father Rafferty; "and now for your toast, Tom, for I'm dry waiting for it."

"Here it is, then," cried Magennis. "A speedy downfal to the Martins!"

"A speedy downfal to the Martins!" was repeated solemnly in chorus; while old Hayes interposed, "Barring the niece—barring Miss Mary."

"I won't except one," cried Magennis. "My august leader remarked, 'It was false pity for individuals destroyed the great revolution of France.' It was——" Mary did not wait for more, but, turning her horse's head, moved slowly around towards the back of the house.

Through a wide space, of which the rickety broken gate hung by a single hinge, Mary entered a large yard, a court littered with disabled carts, harrows, and other field implements, all equally unserviceable. Beneath a low shed along one of the walls stood three or four horses, with harness on them, evidently belonging to the guests assembled within. All these details were plainly visible by the glare of an immense fire which blazed on the kitchen hearth, and threw its light more than half-way across the yard. Having disposed of her horse at one end of the shed, Mary stealthily drew nigh the kitchen window, and looked in. An old, very old woman, in the meanest attire, sat crouching beside the fire, and although she held a huge wooden ladle in her hand, seemed, by her drooped head and bent-down attitude, either moping or asleep. Various cooking utensils were on the fire, and two or three joints of meat hung roasting before it, while the hearth was strewn with dishes, awaiting the savoury fare that was to fill them.

These, and many other indications of the festivity then going on within, Mary rapidly noticed; but it was evident, from the increasing eagerness of her gaze, that the object which she sought had not yet met her eye. Suddenly, however, the door of the kitchen opened and a figure entered, on which the young girl bent all her attention. It was Joan Landy, but how different from the half timid, half reckless peasant girl that last we saw her. Dressed in a heavy gown of white satin, looped up on either side with wreaths of flowers, and wearing a rich lace cap on her head, she rushed hurriedly in, her face deeply flushed, and her eyes sparkling with excitement. Hastily snatching up a check apron that lay on a chair, she fastened it about her, and drew near the fire. It was plain from her gesture, as she took the ladle from the old womans's hand, that she was angry, and by her manner seemed as if rebuking her. The old crone, however, only crouched lower, and spreading out her wasted fingers towards the blaze, appeared insensible to everything addressed to her. Meanwhile Joan busied herself about the fire with all the zealous activity of one accustomed to the task. Mary watched her intently; she scrutinised with piercing keenness every lineament of that face, now moved by its passing emotions, and she muttered to herself, "Alas, I have come in vain!" Nor was this depressing sentiment less felt as Joan, turning from the fire, approached a fragment of a broken looking-glass that stood against the wall. Drawing herself up to her full height, she stood gazing proudly, delightedly, at her own figure. The humble apron, too, was speedily discarded, and as she trampled it beneath her feet she seemed to spurn the mean condition of which it was the symbol. Mary Martin sighed deeply as she looked, and muttered once more, "In vain!"

Then suddenly starting, with one of those bursts of energy which so often had steeled her heart against peril, she walked to the kitchen-door, raised the latch, and entered. She had made but one step within the door when Joan turned and beheld her, and there they both stood, silently, each surveying the other. Mary felt too intensely the difficulty of the task before her to utter a word without well weighing the consequences. She knew how the merest accident might frustrate all she had in view, and stood hesitating and uncertain, when Joan, who now recognised her, vacillated between her instinctive sense of respect and a feeling of defiance in the consciousness of where she was. Happily for her, the former sentiment prevailed, and in a tone of kindly anxiety Joan drew near her and said:

"Has anything happened? I trust in God no accident has befel you."

"Thank God, nothing worse than a wetting," said Mary—"some little fatigue; and I'll think but little of either if they have brought me here to a good end. May I speak with you alone—quite alone?"

"Come in here," said Joan, pushing open the door of a small room off the kitchen which served for a species of larder—"come in here."

"I have come on a sad errand," said Mary, taking her hand between both her own, "and I would that it had fallen to any other than myself. It is for you to decide that I have not come in vain."

"What is it? tell me what it is?" cried Joan, as a sudden paleness spread over her features.

"These are days of sorrow and mourning everywhere," said Mary, gloomily. "Can you not guess what my tidings may be? No, no," cried she, as a sudden gesture of Joan interrupted her—"no, not yet; he is still alive, and entreats to see you."

"To curse me again, is it?" cried the other, wildly—"to turn me from the door, and pray down curses on me—is it for that he wants to see me?"

"Not for that, indeed," said Mary; "it is to see you—to give you his last kiss—his last blessing—to forgive you and be forgiven. Remember that he is alone, deserted by all that once were his. Your father, and mother, and sisters are all gone to America, and poor old Mat lingers on—nay, the journey is nigh ended. Oh, do not delay, lest it be too late. Come now—now."

"And if I see him once, can I ever come back to this?" cried Joan, in bitter agony. "Will I ever be able to hear his words and live as I do now?"

"Let your own good heart guide you for that," cried Mary; "all I ask is, that you should see him and be with him. I have pledged myself for your coming, and you will not dishonour my words to one on his death-bed."

"And I'll be an outcast for it. Tom will drive me from the door and never see me again. I know it—I know *him!*"

"You are wrong, Joan Landy."

"Joan!—who dares to call me Joan Landy when I'm Mrs.

Magennis of Barnagheela? and if *I*'m not *your* equal, I'm as good as any other in the barony. Was it to insult me you came here to-night, to bring up to me, who I am and where I came from? That's the errand that brought you through the storm! Ay," cried she, lashed to a wilder passion by her own words—"ay!—ay! and if you and yours had their will we'd not have the roof to shelter us this night. It's only to-day that we won the trial against you."

"Whatever my errand here this night," said Mary, with a calm dignity, "it was meant to serve and not insult you. I know, as well as your bitterest words can tell me, that this is not my place; but I know, too, if from yielding to my selfish pride I had refused your old grandfather this last request, it had been many a year of bitter reproach to me."

"Oh, you'll break my heart, you will, you will!" cried Joan, bitterly. "You'll turn the only one that's left against me, and I'll be alone in the world."

"Come with me this night, and whatever happen I'll befriend you," said Mary.

"And not desert me because I'm what I am?"

"Never, Joan, never!"

"Oh! my blessings on you—if the blessing of one like me is any good," cried she, kissing Mary's hand fervently. "Oh! they that praised you said the truth; you have goodness enough in your heart to make up for us all! I'll go with you to the world's end."

"We'll pass Cro' Martin, and you shall have my horse——"

"No, no, Miss Mary; I'll go on my feet, it best becomes me. I'll go by Burnane—by the Gap—I know it well—too well!" added she, as the tears rushed to her eyes. As she was speaking she took off the cap she wore and threw it from her, and then removing her dress, put on the coarse woollen gown of her daily wear. "Oh, God forgive me!" cried she, "if I curse the day that I ever wore better than this."

Mary assisted her with her dress, fastening the hood of her cloak over her head, and preparing her, as best she might, for the severe storm she was to encounter, and it was plain to see that Joan accepted these little services without a thought of by whom they were rendered, so intensely occupied was her mind by the enterprise before her. A feverish haste to be away marked all she did. It was partly terror lest her escape might be prevented; partly a sense of distrust in herself, and that she might abandon her own resolution.

"Oh, tell me," she cried, as the tears streamed from her eyes, and her lips quivered with agony, "oh, tell me I'm doing right; tell me that God's blessing is going with me this night, or I can't do it."

"And so it is, dear Joan," said Mary; "be of good heart, and Heaven will support you. I'm sure the trial is a sore one."

"Oh, is it not to leave this—to leave him—maybe for ever? To be sure it's for ever," cried she, bitterly. "He'll never forgive me!"

A wild burst of revelry now resounded from the parlour, and the discordant sounds of half-drunken voices burst upon their ears.

Joan started, and gazed wildly around her. The agonised look of her features bespoke her dread of detection, and then, with a bound, she sprung madly from the spot, and was away. Mary followed quickly, but before she had secured her horse and mounted, the other was already half-way down the mountain. Now catching, now losing sight of her again, Mary at last came up with her.

"Remember, dear Joan," said Mary, "there are nine weary miles of mountain before you."

"I know it well," was the brief reply.

"And if you go by Burnane the rocks are slippy with the rain, and the path to the shore is full of danger."

"If I was afeard of danger would I be here?" cried she "Oh, Miss Mary," added she, stopping and grasping her hand in both her own, "leave me to myself—don't come with me—it's not one like you ought to keep me company."

"But, Joan—dear Joan—I have promised to be your friend, and I am not one who forgets a pledge."

"My heart will break—it will break in two if you talk to me. Leave me, for the love of Heaven, and let me go my road all alone. There, at the two trees there, is the way to Cro' Martin; take it, and may the Saints guide you safe home!"

"And if I do, Joan, will you promise me to come straight back to Cro' Martin after you've seen him? Will you do this?"

"I will—I will!" cried she, bathing Mary's hand with her tears as she kissed it.

"Then God bless and protect you, poor girl!" said Mary. "It is not for me to dictate to your own full heart. Good-by—good-by."

Before Mary had dried the warm tears that rose to her eyes Joan was gone.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE END OF A BAR MESS.

There are few things more puzzling to the uninitiated than the total separation lawyers are able to exercise between their private sentiments and the emotions they display in the wear and tear of their profession. So widely apart are these two characters, that it is actually difficult to understand how they ever can unite in one man. But so it is. He can pass his morning in the most virulent assaults upon his learned brother, ridiculing his law, laughing at his logic, arraigning his motives —nay, sometimes ascribing to him some actually base and wicked. Altercations, heightened by all that passion stimulated by wit can produce, ensue. Nothing that can taunt, provoke, or irritate, is omitted; personalities even are introduced to swell the acrimony of the contest; and yet, when the jury have given in their verdict and the court breaks up, the gladiators, who seemed only thirsting for each other's blood, are seen laughingly going homeward arm-in-arm, mayhap discoursing over the very cause which, but an hour back, seemed to have stamped them enemies for the rest of life.

Doubtless there is a great deal to be pleased at in all this, and we ought to rejoice in the admirable temper by which men can discriminate between the faithful performance of a duty and the natural course of their affections. Still, small-minded folk—of which wide category we own ourselves to be a part— may have their misgivings that the excellence of this system is not without its alloy, and that even the least ingenious of men will ultimately discover how much principle is sapped, and how much truthfulness of character is sacrificed in this continual struggle between fiction and reality.

The Bar is the nursery of the Senate, and it would not be a very fanciful speculation were we to ascribe the laxity of purpose, the deficient earnestness, and the insincerity of principle we often deplore in our public men, to this same legal training.

The old lawyer, however, finds no difficulty in the double character. With his wig and gown he puts on his sarcasm, his insolence, and his incredulity. His brief bag opens to him a Pandora's box of noxious influences; and as he passes the precincts of the court, he leaves behind him all the amenities of life and all the charities of his nature. The young barrister does not find the transmutation so easy. He gives himself unreservedly to his client, and does not measure his ardour by the instructions in his brief. Let us ask pardon of our reader for what may seem a *mal à propos* digression; but we have been led to these remarks by the interests of our story.

It was in the large dining-room of the "Martin Arms" at Oughterard that a party of lawyers spent the evening, some of whose events elsewhere our last chapter has recorded. It was the Bar mess of the Western Circuit, and the chair was filled by no less a person than "Father Repton." This able "leader" had determined not to visit the west of Ireland so long as his friend Martin remained abroad; but a very urgent entreaty from Scanlan, and a pressing request for his presence, had induced him to waive that resolve, and come down special to Oughterard for the Magennis case.

A simple case of ejectment could scarcely have called for that imposing array of learned counsel who had repaired to this unfrequented spot—so small a skirmish could never have called for the horse, foot, and dragoons of law—the wily conveyancer, the clap-trap orator, the browbeater of witnesses, and the light sharpshooter at technicalities—and yet there they were all met, and—with all reverence be it spoken—very jolly companions they were.

An admirable rule precluded the introduction of, or even an allusion to, professional subjects, save when the burden of a joke, whose success might excuse the transgression; and thus these crafty, keen intelligences argued, disputed, jested, and disported together, in a vein which less practised talkers would find it hard to rival. To the practice of these social amenities is doubtless ascribable the absence of any rancour from the rough contests and collisions of public life, and thus men of every shade of politics and party, differing even in class and condition, formed admirable social elements, and cohered together to perfection.

As the evening wore on, the company insensibly thinned off. Some of the hard-workers retired early; a few, whose affectation it was to pretend engagements, followed; the "juniors" repaired in different groups to the chambers of their friends, where loo and brandy-and-water awaited them; and at last Repton was left, with only two others, sole occupants of that spacious apartment. His companions were like himself, soldiers of the "Vieille Garde" veterans who remembered Curran and Lawrence Parsons, John Toler and Saurin, and a host of others, who only needed that the sphere should have been greater to be themselves among the great of the nation.

Rawlins was Repton's schoolfellow, and had been his rival at the Bar for nigh fifty years. Niel, a few years younger than either, was the greatest orator of his time. Both had been opposed to Repton in the present suit, and had held heavy retainers for their services.

"Well Repton," said Rawlins, as soon as they were left thus to themselves, "are you pondering over it still? I see that you can't get it out of your head."

"It is quite true, I cannot," said Repton. To summon us all down here—to bring us some fifty miles away from our accustomed beat, for a trumpery affair like this, is totally beyond me. Had it been an election time, I should probably have understood it."

"How so?" cried Niel, in the shrill piercing voice peculiar to him, and which imparted to him, even in society, an air of querulous irritability.

"On the principle that Bob Mahon always puts a thoroughbred horse in his gig when he drives over to a country race. He's always ready for a match with what he jocularly calls 'the old screw I'm driving this minute;' so, Niel, I thought that the retainer for the ejectment might have turned out to be a special fee for the election."

"And he'd have given them a speech, and a rare good one, too, I promise you," said Rawlins; and even if he had not time to speak it, the county paper would have had it all printed and corrected from his own hand, with all the appropriate interruption of 'vociferous cheering,' and the places where the orator was obliged to pause, from the wild tumult of acclamation that surrounded him."

"Which all resolves itself into this," screamed Niel, "that some men's after-grass is better than other men's meadows."

"Mine has fallen to the scythe many a day ago," said

Rawlins, plaintively; "but I remember glorious times and glorious fellows. It was, indeed, worth something to say, 'Vixissi cum illis.'"

"There's another still better, Rawlins," cried Repton, joyously, "which is to have survived them!"

"Very true," cried Niel. "I'd always plead a demurrer to any notice to quit, for, take it all in all, this life has many enjoyments."

"Such as Attorney-Generalships, Masters of the Rolls, and such like," said Repton.

"By the way," said Rawlins, "who put that squib in the papers about your having refused the rolls—eh, Niel?"

"Who but Niel himself," chimed in Repton. "It was filing a bill of discovery. He wanted to know the intentions of the Government."

"I could have had but little doubt of them," broke in Niel. "It was my advice, man, cancelled your appointment as Crown Counsel, Repton. I told Massingbred, 'If you do keep a watch-dog, let it be at least one who'll bite some one beside the family.'"

"He has muzzled you there, Repton," said Rawlins, laughing. "Eh, that was a bitter draught!"

"So it was," said Repton. "It was Curran wine run to the lees! and very unlike the racy flavour of the true liquor. And to speak in all seriousness, what has come over us all to be thus degenerate and fallen? It is not alone that we have not the equals of the first-rate men, but we really have nothing to compare with O'Grady, and Parsons, and a score of others."

"I'll tell you why," cried Niel—"the commodity isn't marketable. The stupid men, who will always be the majority everywhere, have got up the cry, that to be agreeable is to be vulgar. We know how large cravats came into fashion; tiresome people came in with high neckcloths."

"I wish they'd go out with hempen ones, then," muttered Repton.

"I'd not refuse them the benefit of the clergy," said Niel, with a malicious twinkle of the eye, that showed how gladly, when occasion offered, he flung a pebble at the Church.

"They were very brilliant—they were very splendid, I own," said Rawlins; "but I have certain misgivings that they gave themselves too much to society."

"Expended too much of their powder in fireworks," cried

Niel, sharply—"so they did; but their rockets showed how high they could rise to."

"Ay, Niel, and we only burn our fingers with ours," said Repton, sarcastically.

"Depend upon it," resumed Rawlins, "as the world grows more practical, you will have less of great convivial display. Agreeability will cease to be the prerogative of first-rate men, but be left to the smart people of society, who earn their soup by their sayings."

"He's right," cried Niel, in his shrillest tone. "The age of alchemists is gone; the sleight-of-hand man and the juggler have succeeded him."

"And were they not alchemists?" exclaimed old Repton, enthusiastically. "Did they not transmute the veriest dross of the earth, and pour it forth from the crucible of their minds a stream of liquid gold?—glorious fellows, who, in the rich abundance of their minds, brought the learning of their early days to illustrate the wisdom of their age, and gave the fresh-heartedness of the schoolboy to the ripe intelligence of manhood."

"And yet how little have they bequeathed to us!" said Niel.

"Would it were even less," broke in Repton. We read the witticism of brilliant conversers in some diary or journal, often ill recorded, imperfectly given, always unaccompanied by the accessories of the scene wherein they occurred. We have not the crash, the tumult, the headlong flow of social intercourse, where the impromptu fell like a thunderbolt, and the bon mots rattled like a fire of musketry. To attempt to convey an impression of these great talkers by a memoir, is like to picture a battle by reading out a list of the killed and wounded."

"Repton is right!" exclaimed Niel. "The recorded bon mot is the words of a song without the music."

"And often where the melody it was, that inspired the verses," added Repton, always glad to follow up an illustration.

"After all," said Rawlins, "the fashion of the day is changed in other respects as well as in conversational excellence. Nothing is like what we remember it!—literature, dress, social habits, oratory. There, for instance, was that young fellow today; his speech to the jury—a very good and sensible one, no doubt—but how unlike what it would have been some five-and-thirty or forty years ago."

"It was first-rate," said Repton, with enthusiasm. "I say it frankly, and 'fas est ab hoste,' for he tripped me up in a point of law, and I have therefore a right to applaud him. To tell you the truth," he added, slily, "I knew I was making a revoke, but I thought none of the players were shrewd enough to detect me."

"Niel and I are doubtless much complimented by the remark," said Rawlins.

"Pooh, pooh!" cried Repton, "what did great guns like you and Niel care for such 'small deer.' You were only brought down here as a great *corps de rêserve.* It was young Nelligan who fought the battle, and admirably he did it. While I was listening to him to-day, I could not help saying to myself, 'It's well for us that there were no fellows of this stamp in our day.' Ay, Rawlins, you know it well. We were speech-makers—these fellows are lawyers."

"Why didn't he dine with us to-day?" asked Niel, sharply.

"Heaven knows. I believe his father lives in the town here; perhaps, too, he had no fancy for a dress-parade before such drill-sergeants as you and Rawlins there."

"You are acquainted with him, I think?" asked Rawlins.

"Yes, slightly; we met, strangely enough, at Cro' Martin last year. He was then on a visit there; a quiet, timid youth, who actually seemed to feel as though his college successes where embarrassing recollections in a society who knew nothing of deans or proctors. There was another young fellow also there at the time—young Massingbred—with about a tenth of this man's knowledge and a fiftieth of his capacity, who took the lead of him on every subject, and by the bare force of an admirable manner and a most unabashed impudence, threw poor Nelligan completely into the background. It was the same kind of thing I've often seen Niel there perform at the Four Courts, where he has actually picked up his law from a worsted opponent, as a highwayman arms himself with the pistols of the man he has robbed."

"I never pillaged *you*, Repton," said Niel, with a sarcastic smile. "*You* had always the privilege the poet ascribes to him who laughs 'before a robber.'"

"Vacuus sed non Inanis," replied Repton, laughing good-humouredly.

"But tell us more of this man Nelligan," said Rawlins. "I'm curious to hear about him."

"And so you are sure to do some of these days, Rawl' That fellow is the man to attain high eminence."

"His religion will stop him!" cried Niel, sharply, for, being himself a Romanist, he was not sorry to have an opportunity of alluding to the disqualifying element.

"Say, rather, it will promote him," chimed in Repton. "Take my word for it, Niel, there is a spirit of mawkish reparation abroad which affects to feel that all your co-religionists have a long arrear due to them, and that all the places and emoluments so long withheld from their ancestors should be showered down upon the present generation;—pretty much upon the same principle that you'd pension a man now because his grandfather had been hanged for rebellion!"

"And very justly too, if you discovered that what you once called rebellion had been very good loyalty!" cried Niel.

"We have not, however, made the discovery you speak of," said Repton; "we have only commuted a sentence, in the sincere hope that you are wiser than your forefathers. But to come back. You may trust me when I say, that a day is coming when you'll not only bless yourself because you're a Papist, but that you *are* one! Ay, sir, it is in 'Liffey-street Chapel' we'll seek for an attorney-general, and out of the Church of the Conception, if that be the name of it, we'll cull our law advisers of the Crown. For the next five-and-twenty years, at least," said he, solemnly, "the fourth-rate Catholic will be preferred to the first-rate Protestant."

"I only hope you may be better at Prophecy than you are in Logic," cried Niel, as he tossed off his glass; "and so, I'm sure, does Nelligan!"

"And Nelligan is exactly the man who will never need the preference, sir. His abilities will raise him, even if there were obstacles to be surmounted. It is men of a different stamp that the system will favour—fellows without industry for the toils of a laborious profession, or talents for the subtleties of a difficult career; men who cherish ambition and are yet devoid of capacity, and will plead the old disabilities of their faith—pretty much as a man might claim his right to be thought a good dancer because his father had a club foot."

"A most lame conclusion!" cried Niel. "Ah, Rawlins," added he, with much compassion, "our poor friend here is breaking terribly. Sad signs there are of decay about him. Even his utterance begins to fail him."

"No, no," said Repton, gaily. "I know what you allude to. It is an old imperfection of mine not to be abte to enunciate the letter *r* correctly, and that was the reason to-day, in Court, that

I called you my ingenious Bother; but I meant Brother, I assure you."

They all laughed good-humouredly at the old man's sally; in good truth, so trained were they to these sort of combats, that they cared little for the wounds such warfare inflicted. And although the tilt was ever understood as with "reversed lances," none ever cherished an evil memory if an unlucky stroke smote too heavily.

"I have asked young Nelligan to breakfast with me to-morrow," said Repton; "will you both come and meet him?"

"We're off at cock-crow!" cried Niel. "Tell him, however, from me, that I am delighted with his *début*, and that all the best wishes of my friends and myself are with him."

And so they parted.

Repton, however, did not retire to bed at once; his mind was still intent upon the subject which had engaged him during the day, and as he walked to and fro in his room, he still dwelt upon it. Scanlan's instructions had led him to believe that the Martins were in this case to have been "put upon their title;" and the formidable array of counsel employed by Magennis seemed to favour the impression. Now it was true that a trifling informality in the service of the writ had quashed the proceedings for the present, but the question remained, "Was the great struggle only reserved for a future day?" It was clear that a man embarrassed as was Magennis could never have retained that strong bar of eminent lawyers. From what fund, then, came these resources? Was there a combination at work? And if so, to what end, and with what object?

The crafty old lawyer pondered long and patiently over these things. His feelings might not inaptly be compared to those of a commandant of a garrison, who sees his stronghold menaced by an enemy he had never suspected. Confident as he is in the resources of his position, he yet cannot resist the impression that the very threat of attack has been prompted by some weakness of which he is unaware.

"To put us on our title," said he, "implies a great war. Let us try and find out who and what are they who presume to declare it!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

A FIRST BRIEF.

The reader has been already told that Joe Nelligan had achieved a great success in his first case. A disputed point of law had been raised, in itself insignificant, but involving in its train a vast variety of momentous interests. Repton, with an ingenuity all his own, had contrived to draw the discussion beyond its original limits, that he might entangle and embarrass the ambitious junior who had dared to confute him. Nelligan accepted the challenge at once, and after a stormy discussion of some hours came out the victor. For a while his timid manner, and an overpowering sense of the great odds against him, seemed to weigh oppressively on him. The very successes he had won elsewhere were really so many disparagements to him now, giving promise, as it were, of his ability. But, despite all these disadvantages, he entered the lists manfully and courageously.

What a many-sided virtue is this same courage! and how prone is the world to award its praises unequally for it. We are enthusiastic for the gallant soldier the earliest in the breach, or the glorious sailor who first jumps upon the enemy's quarter-deck, and yet we never dream of investing with heroism him who dares to combat with the most powerful intellects of debate, or enters the field of argument against minds stored with vast resources of knowledge, and practised in all the subtleties of disputation.

It is true, existence is not in the issue, but are there not things a thousand times dearer than life at peril? Think of him who has gone on from success to success—whose school triumphs have but heralded the riper glories of college life—

who, rising with each new victory, is hailed by that dearest and best of all testimonies, the prideful enthusiasm of his own age. Fancy him, the victor in every struggle, who has carried all before him—the vaunted chief of his contemporaries—fancy him beaten and worsted on his first real field of action! Imagine such a man, with all the prestige of his college fame, rudely encountered and overcome in the contest of public life, and say if any death ever equalled the suffering!

Happily, our task has not to record any such failure in the present case. Young Nelligan sat down amidst the buzzing sound of approving voices, and received a warm eulogy from the Court on the promise of so conspicuous an opening. And a proud man was Dan Nelligan on that day! At any other time how deeply honoured had he felt by the distinguished notice of the great dignitaries who now congratulated him on his son's success. With what pride had he accepted the polite recognition of Chief Barons and silk-gowned "leaders!" Now, however, his heart had but room for one thought—Joe himself—his own boy—the little child as it were of yesterday, now a man of mark and note, already stamped with the impress of success in what, to every Irishman's heart at least, is the first of all professions. The High Sheriff shook old Nelligan's hand in open court, and said, "It is an honour to our county, Nelligan, to claim him." The Judge sent a message that he wished to see him in his robing-room, and spoke his warm praises of "the admiral speech, as remarkable for its legal soundness as for its eloquence;" and Repton overtook him in the street, and, catching his hand, said, "Be proud of him, sir, for we are all proud of him."

Mayhap the hope is not a too ambitious one, that some one of those who may glance over these humble lines may himself have once stood in the position of Joe Nelligan, in so far as regards the hour of his triumph; and have felt in his heart the ecstasy of covering with his fame the "dear head" of a father.

If so, I ask him boldly—whatever may have been the high rewards of his later fire—whatever honours may have been showered upon him, however great his career, and however brilliant its recognitions—has he ever, in his proudest moments, tasted such a glorious thrill of delight as when he has fallen into his father's arms, overcome by the happiness that he has made that father proud of him? Oh ye who have experienced this thrill of joy within you, cherish and preserve it. The most glowing eulogies of eloquence, the most ornate paragraphs of a flattering press, are sorry things in comparison to it. For ourselves, we had rather have been Joe Nelligan when, with his father's warm tears dimming his eyes, he said, "God bless you, my boy!" than have gained all the honours that even talents like his can command!

He could not bear to absent himself from home that day; and although his father would gladly have celebrated his triumph by gathering his friends about him, Joe entreated that they might be alone. And they were so. The great excitement of the day over, a sense of weariness, almost sadness, stole over the young man, and while his father continued to relate for his mother's hearing various little incidents of the trial, he listened with a half apathetic dreaminess, as though the theme oppressed him. The old man dwelt with delight on the flattering attention bestowed by the Court on Joseph's address—the signs of concurrence vouchsafed from time to time by the Bench—the approving murmur of the Bar while he spoke—and then the honest outburst of enthusiasm that shook the very walls as he concluded. "I tried," continued Dan Nelligan—"I tried to force my way through the crowd, and come and tell you that he gained the day, but I couldn't, they were all around me, shaking my hands, patting me on the shoulders, and saying, as if I didn't know it in my own heart, 'He'll make you a proud man yet, Mr. Nelligan.'"

"I heard it all, five minutes after it was over," said Mrs. Nelligan; "and you'd never guess who told me."

"Counsellor Walsh," cried Nelligan.

"No, indeed; I never seen him."

"It was Hosey Lynch, then, for I saw him running like mad through the town, spreading the news everywhere."

"It was not Hosey," said she, half contemptuously. "I wish, Joe, you'd give a guess yourself who told me."

"Guess, mother—guess who told you what?" said he, suddenly starting from some deep meditation.

"Who told me that you won the cause, and beat all the great counsellors from Dublin."

"I'm sure, mother, it would be hard for me to say," said Joseph, smiling faintly; "some of our kind townsfolk, perhaps. Father Neal, old Peter Hayes, or——

"I'll just tell you at once," broke she in, half irritated at the suggested source of her information. "It was Miss Mary herself, and no other."

"Miss Martin!" exclaimed old Nelligan.

"Miss Mary Martin!" echoed Joe, while a sickly paleness crept over his features, and his lips trembled as he spoke.

"How came you to see her? Where was she?" asked Nelligan, eagerly.

"I'll tell you," replied she, with all the methodical preparation by which she heralded in the least important communications—"I'll tell you. I was sitting here, working at the window, and wondering when the trial would be over, for the goose that was for dinner was too near the fire, and I said to myself——"

"Never mind what you said to yourself—confound the goose," broke in old Dan, fiercely.

"Faith, then, I'd like to know if you'd be pleased to eat your dinner on the cold loin of veal——"

"But Miss Martin, mother—Miss Martin," urged Joe, impatiently.

"I'm coming to her, if you'll let me; but when you flurry me and frighten me, I'm ready to faint. It was last Candlemas you gave me a start, Dan, about—what was it, now? Lucky Mason's dog, I believe. No, it was the chimney took fire——"

"Will you just go back to Miss Martin, if you please," said old Nelligan, sternly.

"I wish I knew where I was—what I was saying last," said she, in a tone of deep sorrow and contrition.

"You were going to say how Miss Mary told you all about the trial mother," said Joe, taking her hand kindly within his own.

"Yes, darling; now I remember it all. I was sitting here at the window hemming them handkerchiefs of yours, and I heard a sharp sound of a horse coming along quick, and, by the way he cantered, I said to myself, 'I know *you*;' and, sure enough, when I opened the window, there she was, Miss Mary herself, all dripping with wet, and her hat flattened on her face, at the door.

"'Don't ask me to get down, Mrs. Nelligan,' said she, for I'm in a great hurry. I have to ride out to Kilkieran with this'—and she showed me a bottle she had in the pocket of her saddle. 'I only called to tell you that your son has gained another——' What was it she called it?—a victory, or a battle—no, it was something else——"

"Never mind—go on," cried Joe; and then?"

"'But, my dear Miss Mary,' says I, 'you're wet through and through. It's more than your life's worth to go off now another ten miles. I'll send our gossoon, Mickey Slater, with the medicine, if you'll just come in and stay with us.' I didn't say to dinner, for I was ashamed to ask her to that.

"'I should be delighted Mrs. Nelligan,' said she, 'but it is impossible to-day. I'd have stayed and asked you for my dinner'—her very words—'asked you for my dinner, but I have promised poor Mat Landy to go back to him. But perhaps it is as well as it is; and my aunt Dorothy might say, if she heard of it, that it was a strange choice I had made of a festive occasion—the day on which we were beaten, and the society of him that worsted us.'

"'Oh, but, Miss Mary,' says I, 'sure you don't think the worse of poor Joe——'

"'I never thought more highly of him, my dear Mrs. Nelligan,' said she, 'than at this moment; and, whatever others may say or think, I'll maintain my opinion, that he is a credit to us all. Good-by! good-by!' and then she turned short round, and said, 'I can't answer for how my uncle may feel about what has occurred to-day, but you know *my* sentiments. Farewell!' And with that she was off: indeed, before I had time to shut down the window, she was out of sight and away."

"She ought to know, and she will know, that Joe never said one hard thing of her family. And though he had in his brief enough to tempt him to bring the Martins up for judgment, not a word, not a syllable did he utter." This old Nelligan spoke with a proud consciousness of his son's honourable conduct."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Joe, "is it not enough that a man sells his intellect, pawns his capacity, and makes traffic of his brains, without being called on to market his very nature, and set up his very emotions for sale? If my calling demands this at my hands, I have done with it—I renounce it;"

"But I said you refrained, Joe. I remarked that you would not suffer the heat of discussion to draw you into an angry attack——"

"And you praise me for it!" broke in Joe, passionately. "You deem it an occasion to compliment me, that, in defending the cause of a worthless debauchee, I did not seize with avidity the happy moment to assail an honourable gentleman; and not alone you, but a dozen others, congratulated me on this reserve—this constraint—as though the lawyer were but a bravo, and his stiletto once paid for, he must produce the body of his victim. I regard my profession in another and a higher light; but if even its practice were the noblest that could engage human faculties, and its rewards the highest that could crown them, I'd quit it to-morrow, were its price to be the sacrifice of an honourable self-esteem and the regard of—of those we care for." And in the difficult utterance of the last words his cheek became crimson, and his lip trembled.

"I'll tell you what you'll do, Joe," said his mother, whose kindness was not invariably distinguished by tact—"just come over with *me* to-morrow to Cro' Martin. I'm going to get slips of the oak-leaf geranium and the dwarf rose, and we'll just go together in a friendly way, and when we're there you'll have some opportunity or other to tell Miss Mary that it wasn't your fault for being against them."

"He'll do no such thing," broke in Nelligan, fiercely. "Miss Mary Martin wants no apologies—her family have no right to any. Joe is a member of a high and powerful profession. If he doesn't fill as great a place now, who knows where he'll not be this day fifteen years, eh, my boy? Maybe I'll not be here to see—indeed, it's more than likely I'll not—but I know it now. I feel as sure of it as I do that my name's Dan."

"And if you are not to see it, father," said Joe, as he pressed his father's hand between both his own—"you and my dearest mother—the prize will be nigh valueless. If I cannot, when my reward is won, come home—to such a home as this—the victory will be too late." And so saying he rose abruptly, and hurried from the room. The moment after he had locked his door, and, flinging himself upon his bed, buried his face between his hands.

With all the proud sensations of having achieved a great success, his heart was heavily oppressed. It seemed to him as though Destiny had decreed that his duty should ever place him in antagonism to his affections. Up to a short period before this trial came on he had frequently been in Miss Martin's company. Now, it was some trifling message for his mother! now, some book he had himself promised to fetch her; then visits to the sick—and Joe, latterly, had taken a most benevolent turn—had constantly brought them together; and often, when Mary was on foot, Joe had accompanied her to the gates of the demesne. In these meetings one subject usually occupied them—the sad condition of the country, the destitution of the poor—and on this theme their sympathies, and hopes, and fears all agreed. It was not only that they concurred in their views of the national character, but that they attributed its traits of good or evil to the very same causes; and while Nelligan was amazed at finding the daughter of a proud house deeply conversant with the daily life of the humblest peasant, she, too, was astonished how sincere in his respect for rank, how loyal in his devotion to the claims of blood, was one whose birth might have proclaimed him a democrat and a destroyer.

These daily discussions led them closer and closer to each other, till at length confidences grew up between them, and Mary owned to many of the difficulties that her lone and solitary station exposed her to. Many things were done on the property without—some indirect opposition to—her concurrence. As she once said herself, "We are so ready to satisfy our consciences by assuming that whatever we may do legally we have a right to do morally, and at the same time, in the actual condition of Ireland, what is just may be practically the very heaviest of all hardships." This observation was made with reference to some law proceedings of Scanlan's instituting, and the day after she chanced to make it Joe started for Dublin. It was there that Magennis's attorney had sent him the brief in that cause—a charge which the etiquette of his profession precluded his declining.

In what way he discharged the trust we have seen—what sorrow it cost him is more than we can describe. "Miss Martin," thought he, "would know nothing of the rules which prescribe our practice, and will look upon my conduct here as a treason. For weeks long she has conversed with me in candour over the state of the county and its people; we separate for a few days, and she finds me arrayed with others against the interests of her family, and actually paid to employ against her the very knowledge she has imparted to me! What a career have I chosen," cried he, in his agony, "if every success is to be purchased at such a price!" With such men as Magennis he had nothing in common; their society, their habits, their opinions were all distasteful to him, and yet it was for him and his he was to sacrifice the dearest hope of his heart—to lose the good esteem of one whose praise he had accounted more costly than the highest distinction a Sovereign could bestow on him. "And what a false position mine!" cried he again. "Associated by the very closest ties with a party, not one of whose objects have my sympathies, I see myself separated by blood, birth, and station, from all that I venerate and respect.

I must either be a traitor to my own, or to myself; declare my enmity to all I think most highly of, or suffer my motives to be impugned, and my fame tarnished."

There was, indeed, one circumstance in this transaction which displeased him greatly, and of which he was only aware when too late. The Magennis defence had been "got up" by a subscription—a fund to which Joseph's own father had contributed. Amongst the machinery of attack upon the landed gentry, Father Neal Rafferty had suggested the expediency of "putting them on their titles" in cases the most trivial and insignificant. Forfeiture and confiscation had followed each other so frequently in Irish history—grants and revocations were so mixed up together—some, attested in all formality, others, irregular and imperfect—that it was currently believed there was scarcely one single estate of the whole province could establish a clear and indisputable title. The project was, therefore, a bold one which, while disturbing the rights of property, should also bring under discussion so many vexed questions of English rule and tyranny over the Irish. Libraries and cabinets were ransacked for ancient maps of the counties; and old records were consulted to ascertain how far the original conditions of service, and so forth, had been complied with, on which these estates were held.

Joseph had frequently carried home books from the library of Cro' Martin, rare and curious volumes, which bore upon the ancient history of the country. And now there crossed him the horrible suspicion that the whole scheme of this attack might be laid to his charge, the information to substantiate which he had thus surreptitiously obtained. It was clear enough, from what his mother had said, that such was not Miss Martin's present impression; but who could say what representations might be made to her, and what change affected in her sentiments? "And this," cried he, in indignation—"and this is the great career I used to long for!—this the broad highway I once fancied was to lead me to honour and distinction! Or is it, after all, my own fault, for endeavouring to reconcile two things which never can have any agreement—an humble origin and high aspirings? Were I an Englishman, the difficulty would not be impassable; but here, in Ireland, the brand of a lowly fortune and a despised race is upon me. Can I—dare I resist it?"

A long and arduous conflict was that in which he passed the night—now, inclining to abandon his profession for ever, now, to leave Ireland, and join the English or some Colonial Bar; and at length, as day was breaking, and as though the fresh morning air which now blew upon him from his open window had given fresh energy to his nature, he determined he would persist in his career in his own country. "*My* fate shall be an example or a warning!" cried he. "They who come after me shall know whether there be rewards within reach of honest toil and steady industry without the contamination of a mock patriotism! If I *do* rise, it shall be from no aid derived from a party or a faction; and, if I fail, I bring no discredit upon 'my order.'"

There are men who can so discipline their minds, that they have but to establish a law to their actions to make their whole lives "a system." Such individuals the Germans not inaptly call "self-contained men," and of these was Joe Nelligan one.

A certain concentration of his faculties, and the fatigues of a whole night passed thus in thought, gave a careworn, exhausted look to his features as he entered the room where Repton sat awaiting him for breakfast.

"I see what's the matter with you," said the old lawyer, as he entered. "You have passed the night after a 'first brief.' This day ten years you'll speak five hours before the Lords 'in error,' and never lose a wink of sleep after it's over!"

CHAPTER XLV.

MR. REPTON LOOKS IN.

On the day after that some of whose events we have just recorded, and towards nightfall, Mary Martin slowly drove along the darkly-wooded avenue of Cro' Martin. An unusual sadness overweighed her. She was just returning from the funeral of poor old Mat Landy, one of her oldest favourites as a child. He it was who first taught her to hold an oar; and, seated beside him, she first learned to stear a "corragh" through the wild waves of the Atlantic. His honest, simple nature, his fine manly contentedness with a very humble lot, and a cheerful gaiety of heart that seemed never to desert him, were all traits likely to impress such a child as she had been and make his companionship a pleasure. With a heavy heart was it, therefore, now that she thought over these things, muttering to herself as she went along snatches of the old songs he used to sing, and repeating mournfully the little simple proverbs he would utter about the weather.

The last scene itself had been singularly mournful. Two fishermen of the coast alone accompanied the car which bore the coffin; death or sickness was in every house; few could be spared to minister to the dead, and even of those, the pale shrunk features and tottering limbs bespoke how dearly the duty cost them. Old Mat had chosen for his last resting-place a little churchyard that crowned a cliff over the sea—a wild solitary spot—an old gable, a ruined wall, a few low grave stones, and no more. The cliff itself, rising abruptly from the sea to some four hundred feet, was perforated with the nests of sea-fowl, whose melancholy cries, as they circled overhead, seemed to ring out a last requiem. There it was they now laid him. Many a time from that bleak summit had he lighted a beacon fire to ships in distress. Often and often, from that same spot, had he gazed out over the sea, to catch signs of those who needed succour, and now that bold heart was still and that strong arm stiffened, and the rough, deep voice that used to sound above the tempest, silent for ever.

"Never mind, Patsey," said Mary, to one of the fishermen, who was endeavouring with some stray fragments of a wreck to raise a little monument over the spot, "I'll look to that hereafter." And so saying she turned mournfully away to descend the cliff. A stranger, wrapped in a large boat-cloak, had been standing for some time near the place, and as Mary left it he drew nigh and asked who she was.

"Who would she be?" said the fisherman, gruffly, and evidently in no humour to converse.

"A wife, or a daughter, perhaps?" asked the other again.

"Neither one nor the other," replied the fisherman.

"It is Miss Mary, sir—Miss Martin—God bless her!" broke in the other. "One that never deserts the poor, living or dead. Musha! but she's what keeps despair out of many a heart!"

"And has she come all this way alone?" asked he.

"What other way could she come, I wonder?" said the man he had first addressed. "Didn't they leave her there by herself, just as if she wasn't belonging to them. They were kinder to old Henderson's daughter than to their own flesh and blood."

"Hush, Jerry, hush!—she'll hear you," cried the other. And, saluting the stranger respectfully, he began to follow down the cliff.

"Are there strangers stopping at the inn?" asked Mary, as she saw lights gleaming from some of the windows as she passed.

"Yes, miss, there's him that was up there at the churchyard —ye didn't remark him maybe—and one or two more."

"I did not notice him," said Mary; and, wishing the men good night, set out homeward. So frequent were the halts she made at different cabins as she drove along, so many times was she stopped to give a word of advice or counsel, that it was already duskish as she reached Cro' Martin, and found herself once more near home. "You're late with the post this evening, Billy," said she, overtaking the little fellow who carried the mail from Oughterard.

"Yes, miss," there was great work sortin' the letters that came in this morning, for I believe there's going to be another election; at least I heard Hosey Lynch say it was all about that made the bag so full."

"I'm sorry for it, Billy," said she. "We have enough to think of, ay, and troubles enough, too, not to need the strife and bitterness of another contest amongst us."

"Thrue for ye, miss, indeed," rejoined Billy. "'Tis wishing them far enough I am them same elections; the bag does be a stone heavier every day till it's over."

"Indeed!" said Mary, half smiling at the remark.

"Thrue as I'm here, miss. I wouldn't wonder if it was the goold for bribin' the chaps makes it weigh so much."

"And is there any other news stirring in the town, Billy?"

"Next to none, miss. They were talkin' of putting up ould Nelligan's son for the mimber; and more says the Magennis of Barnagheela will stand."

"A most excellent choice that would be, certainly," said Mary, laughing.

"Faix! I heerd of another that wasn't much better, miss."

"And who could that be?" asked Mary, in astonishment.

"But sure you'd know better than me, if it was thrue, more by token it would be the master's own orders."

"I don't understand you, Billy."

"I mean, miss, that it's only his honer, Mr. Martin, could have the power to make Maurice Scanlan a Parlimint man."

"And has any one hinted at such a possibility?" said she, in astonishment.

"Indeed, then, it was the talk of the market this mornin' and many a one said he's the very fellow would get in."

"Is he such a general favourite in Oughterard?"

"I'm not sure it's that, miss," said Billy, thoughtfully "Maybe some likes him, and more is afraid of him; but he himself knows everybody and everybody's business. He can raise the rent upon this man, take it off that; 'tis his word can make a barony-constable or one of the watch. They say he has the taxes too in his power, and can cess you just as he likes. Be my conscience, he's all as one as the Prime Minister."

Just as Billy had delivered this sage reflection they had reached the hall door, where, having consigned the letter-bag to the hands of a servant, he turned his steps to the kitchen, to take an "air of the fire" before he set out homeward. Mary Martin had not advanced many steps within the hall when both her hands were cordially grasped, and a kind voice, which she at once recognised as Mr. Repton's, said, "Here I am, my dear Miss Martin; arrived in time, too, to welcome you home again. You paid me a visit yesterday——"

"Yes," broke she in; "but you were shaking your ambrosial curls at the time, browbeating the bench, or cajoling the jury, or something of that sort."

"That I was; but I must own with scant success. You've heard how that young David of Oughterard slew the old Goliath of Dublin? Well, shall I confess it? I'm glad of it. I feel proud to think that the crop of clever fellows in Ireland is flourishing, and that when I, and a dozen like me pass away, our places will be filled by others that will keep the repute of our great profession high in the public estimation."

"This is worthy of you, sir," cried Mary, pressing the arm she leaned on more closely.

"And now, my dear Miss Mary," said he, as they entered the drawing-room, "now that I have light to look at you, let me make my compliments on your appearance. Handsomer than ever, I positively declare. They told me in the town that you half killed yourself with fatigue—that you frequently were days long on horseback, and nights watching by sick beds; but if this be the result, benevolence is indeed its own reward."

"Ah, my dear Mr. Repton, I see you do not keep all your flatteries for the jury-box."

"My moments are too limited here to allow me time for an untruth. I must be off; to-night I have a special retainer for a great record at Roscommon, and at this very instant I should be poring over deeds and parchments, instead of gazing at 'orbs divinely blue;' not but, I believe, now that I look closer, yours are hazel."

"Let me order dinner, then, at once," said she, approaching the bell.

"I have done that already, my dear," said he, gaily; "and what is more, I have dictated the bill of fare. I guessed what a young lady's simple meal might be, and I have been down to the cook, and you shall see the result."

"Then it only remains for me to think of the cellar. What shall it be, sir? The Burgundy that you praised so highly last winter, or the Port that my uncle preferred to it?"

"I declare that I half suspect your uncle was right. Let us move for a new trial, and try both over again," said he, laughing, as she left the room.

"Just to think of such a girl, in such a spot," cried he to himself, as he walked alone, up and down the room; "beauty, grace, fascination—all that can charm and attract; and then, such a nature—childlike in gaiety, and chivalrous, ay, chivalrous as a chevalier!"

"I see, sir, you are rehearsing for Roscommon," said Mary, who entered the room while he was yet declaiming alone; "but I must interrupt you, for the soup is waiting."

"I obey the summons," said he, tending his arm. And they both entered the dinner room.

So long as the meal lasted Repton's conversation was entirely devoted to such topics as he might have discussed at a formal dinner-party. He talked of the world of society, its deaths, births, and marriages—its changes of place and amusement. He narrated the latest smart things that were going the round of the clubs, and hinted at the political events that were passing. But the servants gone, and the chairs drawn closer to the blazing hearth, his tone changed at once, and in a voice of tremulous kindness he said:

"I can't bear to think of the solitude of this life of yours! —nay, hear me out. I say this, not for *you*, since in the high devotion of a noble purpose you are above all its penalties; but I cannot endure to think that *we* should permit it."

"First of all," said Mary, rapidly, "what you deem solitude is scarcely such; each day is so filled with its duties, that when I come back here of an evening, it often happens that my greatest enjoyment is the very sense of isolation that awaits me. Do you know," added she, "that very often the letter-bag lies unopened by me till morning? And as to newspapers, there they lie in heaps, their covers unbroken to this hour. Such is actually the case to-day. I haven't read my letters yet."

"I read mine in my bed," cried Repton. "I have them brought to me by candlelight in winter, and I reflect over all the answers while I am dressing. Some of the sharpest things I have ever said have occurred to me while I was shaving; not," added he, hastily, "but one's really best things are always impromptu. Just as I said t'other day to the Viceroy—a somewhat felicitous one. He was wishing that some historian would choose for his subject the lives of Irish Lord-Lieutenants; not, he remarked, in a mere spirit of party, or with the levity of partisanship, but in a spirit becoming the dignity of history—such as Hume himself might have done. 'Yes, my lord,' I replied, 'your observation is most just, it should be a continuation of Rapine.' Eh! it was a home-thrust, wasn't it?—'a continuation of Rapine.'" And the old man laughed till his eyes ran over.

"Do these great folk ever thoroughly forgive such things?" asked Mary.

"My dear child, their self-esteem is so powerful they never feel them, and even when they do, the chances are that they store them up in their memories, to retail afterwards as their own. I have detected my own stolen property more than once, but always so damaged by wear, and disfigured by ill-usage, that I never thought of reclaiming it."

"The affluent need never fret for a little robbery," said Mary smiling.

"Ay, but they may like to be the dispensers of their own riches," rejoined Repton, who never was happier than when able to carry out another's illustration.

"Is Lord Reckington agreeable?" asked Mary, trying to lead him on to any other theme than that of herself.

"He is eminently so. Like all men of his class, he makes more of a small stock in trade than we with our heads full can ever pretend to. Such men talk well, for they think fluently. Their tact teaches them the popular tone on every subject, and they have the good sense never to rise above it."

"And Massingbred, the secretary, what of him?"

"A very well-bred gentleman, strongly cased in the triple armour of official dullness. Such men converse as stupid whist players play cards—they are always asking to 'let them see the last trick;' and the consequence is they are ever half-an-hour behind the rest of the world. Ay, Miss Mary, and this is an age where one must never be half-a-second in arrear. This is really delicious port, and now that the Burgundy is finished, I think I prefer it. Tell Martin I said so when you write to him. I hope the cellar is well stocked with it."

"It was so when my uncle went away, but I fear I have made great inroads upon it. It was my chief remedy with the poor."

"With the poor! such wine as this, the richest grape that ever purpled over the Douro! Do you tell me that you gave this to these—— Heaven forgive me, what am I saying? Of course you gave it; you gave them what was fifty times more precious—the kind ministerings of your own angelic nature, the soft words, and soft looks and smiles that a prince might have knelt for. I'm not worthy to drink another glass of it," added he, as he pushed the decanter from him towards the centre of the table.

"But you shall, though," said Mary filling his glass, "and it shall be a bumper to my health."

"A toast I'd stake my life for," said he, reverently, as he lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it with all the deference of a courtier. "And now, added he, refilling his glass, "I drink this to the worthy fellow whose portrait is before me, and may he soon come back again." He arose as he spoke, and giving his hand to Mary, led her into the drawing-room. "Ay, my dear Miss Mary," said he, following up the theme in his own thoughts, "it is here your uncle ought to be. When the army is in rout and dismay, the general's presence is the talisman that restores discipline. Everything around us at this moment is full of threatening danger. The catalogue of the assizes is a dark record; I never saw its equal, no more have *I* ever witnessed anything to compare with the dogged indifference of the men arraigned. The Irishman is half a fatalist by nature; it will be an evil hour that makes him wholly one!"

"But still," said Mary, "you'd scarcely counsel his return here at this time. The changes that have taken place would fret him deeply, not to speak of even worse!"

She delivered the last few words in a voice broken and trembling, and Repton, turning quickly towards her, said:

"I know what you point at: the irritated feeling of the people and that insolent menace they dared to affix to his own door."

"You heard of that, then?" cried she, eagerly.

"To be sure I heard of it; and I heard how your own hands tore it down, and riding with it into the midst of them at Kiltimmon market, you said, 'I'll give five hundred pounds to him who shows me who did this, and I'll forfeit five hundred more if I do not horsewhip the coward from the county.'"

Mary hid her face within her hands, but closely as she pressed them there, the warm tears would force their way through, and fall, dropping, on her bosom.

"You are a noble girl," cried he, in ecstasy; "and in all your great trials there is nothing finer than this, that the work of your benevolence has never been stayed by the sense of ill-requital, and you have never involved the character of a people in the foul crime of a miscreant."

"How could I so wrong them, sir?" broke she out. "Who better than myself can speak of their glorious courage, their patient resignation, their noble self-devotion? Has not the man sinking under fever crawled from his bed to lead me to the house of another deeper in misery than himself? Have I not seen the very poorest sharing the little alms bestowed upon their wretchedness? Have I not heard the most touching words of gratitude from lips growing cold in death? You may easily show me lands of greater comfort, where the blessings of wealth and civilization are more widely spread, but I defy you to point to any where the trials of a whole people have been so great and so splendidly sustained."

"I'll not ask the privilege of reply," said Repton; "perhaps I'd rather be convinced by you than attempt to gainsay one word of your argument."

"At your peril, sir," said she, menacing him with her finger, while a bright smile lit up her features.

"The chaise is at the door, sir," said a servant, entering and addressing Repton.

"Already!" exclaimed he. "Why, my dear Miss Mary, it can't surely be eight o'clock. No; but," added he, looking at his watch, "it only wants a quarter of ten, and I have not said one-half of what I had to say, nor heard a fourth of what you had to tell me."

"Let the postboy put up his horses, William," said Miss Martin, "and bring tea."

"A most excellent suggestion," chimed in Repton. "Do you know, my dear, that we old bachelors never thoroughly appreciate all that we have missed in domesticity till we approach a tea-table. We surround ourselves with fifty mockeries of home-life, we can manage soft carpets, warm curtains, snug dinners, but somehow our cup of tea is a rude imitation that only depicts the inaccuracy of the copy. Without the priestess the tea-urn sings forth no incantation."

"How came it that Mr. Repton remained a Benedict?" asked she, gaily.

"By the old accident, that he wouldn't take what he might have, and couldn't get what he wished. Add to that," continued he, after a pause, "when a man comes to a certain time of life without marrying, the world has given to him a certain place, assigned to him, as it were, a certain part, which would be utterly marred by a wife. The familiarity of one's female acquaintance—the pleasantest spot in old bachelorhood—couldn't stand such an ordeal; and the hundred-and-one eccentricities pardonable and pardoned in the single man, would b condemned in the married one. You shake your head. Well now, I'll put it to the test. Would you, or could you, make me your confidant so unreservedly if there were such a person as Mrs. Repton in the world? Not a bit of it, my dear child. We old bachelors are the lay priests of society, and many come to us with confessions they'd scruple about making to the regular authorities."

"Perhaps you are right," said she, thoughtfully; "at all events, *I* should have no objection to you as my confessor."

"I may have to claim that promise one of these days yet," said he, significantly. "Eh! here comes William again. Well, the postboy won't wait, or something has gone wrong. Eh! William, what is it?"

"The boy's afraid, sir, if you don't go soon, that there will be no passing the river at Barnagheela—the flood is rising every minute."

"And already the water is too deep," cried Mary. "Give the lad his supper, William. Let him make up his cattle, and say that Mr. Repton remains here for the night."

"And Mr. Repton obeys," said he, bowing; "though what is to become of 'Kelly *versus* Lenaham and another,' is more than I can say."

"They'll have so many great guns, sir," said Mary, laughing, "won't they be able to spare a twenty-four pounder?"

"But I ought at least to appear in the battery, my dear. They'll say that I stayed away on account of that young fellow Nelligan: he has a brief in that cause, and I know he'd like another tussle with me. By the way, Miss Mary, that reminds me that I promised him to make his—no, not his excuses, he was too manly for that, but his—his explanations to you about yesterday's business. He was sorely grieved at the part assigned him; he spoke feelingly of all the attentions he once met at your uncle's hands, but far more so of certain kindnesses shown to his mother, by yourself; and surmising that you might be unaware of the exacting nature of our Bar etiquette, that leaves no man at liberty to decline a cause, he tortured himself inventing means to set himself right with you."

"But I know your etiquette, sir, and I respect it; and Mr Nelligan never stood higher in my estimation than by his conduct of yesterday. You can tell him, therefore, that you saw there was no necessity to touch on the topic; it will leave less unpleasantness if we should meet again."

"What a diplomatist it is," said Repton, smiling affectionately at her. "How successful must all this tact be when engaged with the people! Nay, no denial; you know in your heart what subtle devices it supplies you with."

"And yet, I'm not so certain that what you call my diplomacy may not have involved me in some trouble—at least, there is the chance of it."

"As how, my dear child?"

"You shall hear, sir. You know the story of that poor girl at Barnagheela, whom they call Mrs. Magennis? Well, her old grandfather—as noble a heart as ever beat—had never ceased to pine after her fall. She had been the very light of his life, and he loved her on, through her sorrow, if not her shame, till, as death drew nigh him, unable to restrain his craving desire, he asked me to go and fetch her, to give her his last kiss and receive his last blessing. It was a task I had fain have declined, were such an escape open to me, but I could not. In a word, I went and did his bidding. She stayed with him till he breathed his last breath, and then—in virtue of some pledge, I hear that she made him—she fled, no one knows whither. All trace of her is lost; and though I have sent messengers on every side, none have yet discovered her."

"Suicide is not the vice of our people," said Repton, gravely.

"I know that well, and the knowledge makes me hopeful. But what sufferings are yet before her! what fearful trials has she to meet!"

"By Jove!" cried Repton, rising and pacing the room, "you have courage, young lady, that would do honour to a man. You brave the greatest perils with a stout-heartedness that the best of us could scarcely summon."

"But, in this case, the peril is not mine, sir."

"I am not so sure of that, Miss Mary," said Repton, doubtingly—"I'm not so sure of that." And, with crossed arms and bent-down head, he paced the room slowly back and forwards. "Ay," muttered he to himself, "Thursday night—Friday, at all events—will close the record. I can speak to evidence on the morning, and be back here again some time in the night. Of course it is a duty—it is more than a duty." Then he added, aloud, "There's the moon breaking out, and a fine breezy sky. I'll take the road, Miss Mary, and, with your good leave, I'll drink tea with you on Friday evening. Nay, my dear, the rule is made absolute."

"I agree," said she, "if it secures me a longer visit on your return."

A few moments afterwards saw Repton seated in the corner of his chaise, and hurrying onward at speed. His eyes soon closed in slumber, and as he sank off to rest, his lips murmured gently, "My lord, in rising to address the Court, under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty, and in a case where vast interest, considerable influence, and, I may add—may add——" The words died away, and he was asleep.

CHAPTER XLVI.

LADY DOROTHEA'S LETTER.

Though it was late when Repton took his departure, Mary Martin felt no inclination for sleep, but addressed herself at once to examine the letter-bag, whose contents seemed more than usually bulky. Amid a mass of correspondence about the estate, she came at length upon the foreign letters, of which there were several from the servants to their friends or relations at Cro' Martin—all, as usual, under cover to Miss Martin, and at last she found one in Lady Dorothea's own hand, for herself, a very rare occurrence—nay, indeed, it was the first epistle her ladyship had favoured her with since her departure.

It was not, then, without curiosity as to the cause that Mary broke the large seal and read as follows:—

"Carlsruhe, Saturday Evening,
Cour de Bade.

"My dear Niece,

"It was only yesterday, when looking over your uncle's papers, I chanced upon a letter of yours, dated some five or six weeks back, and which, to my great astonishment, I discovered had never been communicated to me—though this mark of deficient confidence will doubtless seem less surprising to *you*.

"To bring your letter to your mind, I may observe it is one in which you describe the condition of the people on the estate, and the fatal inroads then making upon them by famine and pestilence. It is not my intention here to advert to what may possibly be a very natural error in your account—the exaggerated picture you draw of their sufferings; your sympathy with them, and your presence to witness much of what they are enduring, will explain and excuse the highly-coloured statement of their sorrows. It were to be wished that an equally valid apology could be made for what I am forced to call the importunity of your demands in their favour. Five of your six last letters now before me are filled with appeals for abatements of rent, loans to carry out improvements, stipends for schoolmasters, doctors, scripture-readers, and a tribe of other hangers-on, that really seem to augment in number as the pauperism of the people increases. However ungracious the task of disparaging the accuracy of your view, I have no other alternative but to accept it, and hence I am forced to pen these lines myself in preference to committing the office to another.

"It really seems to me that you regard our position as landed proprietors in the light of a mere stewardship, and that it is our bounden duty to expend upon the tenantry the proceeds of the estate, reserving a scanty per-centage, perhaps, for ourselves to live upon. How you came to this opinion, and whence you acquired it, I have no means of knowing. If, however, it has been the suggestion of your own genius, it is right you should know that you hold doctrines in common with the most distinguished communists of modern times, and are quite worthy of a seat of honour beside those who are now convulsing society throughout Europe.

"I am unwilling to utter anything like severity towards errors, many of which take their rise in a mistaken and ill-directed benevolence, because the original fault of committing the management of this property to your hands was the work of another. Let me hope that sincere sorrow for so fatal a mistake may not be the primary cause of his present attack——"

When Mary read so far, she started with a sudden fear, and turning over the pages of the long letter, she sought for some allusion to her uncle. At length she found the following lines:

"Your cousin would have left this for Ireland, but for the sudden seizure your poor uncle has suffered from, and which came upon him after breakfast, in apparently his ordinary health. The entire of the left side is attacked—the face particularly—and his utterance quite inarticulate."

For some minutes she could read no more, the warm tears rolled down her cheeks and dropped heavily on the paper, and she could only mutter to herself, "My poor, dear uncle—my last, my only friend in the world!" Drying her eyes, with a great effort she read on:

"The remedies have been so far successful as to arrest the progress of the malady, and his appetite is good, and his spirits, everything considered, are excellent. Of course, all details of business are strictly excluded from his presence; and your cousin has assumed whatever authority is necessary to the management of the property. We thought at one time your presence here might have been desirable, but, considering the distance, the difficulty of travelling without suitable companionship, and other circumstances, it would, on the whole, be a step we should not recommend; and, indeed, your uncle himself has not expressed any wishes on the subject."

She dropped the letter at these words, and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed bitterly and long; at length, and with an effort which taxed her strength to the utmost, she read on:

"Although, however, you are to remain at Cro' Martin, it will be more than ever imperative you should reduce the establishment there within the very strictest possible limits; and to begin this reform, I'm fully assured it is necessary you should depose old Mrs. Broon, who is really incapable of her duties, while her long-acquired habits of expense render her incompatible with any new regulations to enforce economy. A moderate pension—something, however, in accordance with her real wants and requirements, rather than what might be called her expectations—should be settled upon her, and there are several farmers on the estate, any one of whom would gladly take charge of her. The gardens still figure largely in the account, and considering the very little probability of our making the place a residence again, might be turned to more profitable use. You will confer with Henderson on the subject, and inquire how far it might be advisable to cultivate vegetables for market, or convert them into paddocks for calves, or, in short, anything which, if less remunerative, should still save the enormous outlay we now hear of. I scarcely like to allude to the stable, knowing how much you lean to the enjoyment of riding and driving; but really these are times when retrenchment is called for at every hand; and I am persuaded that for purposes of health walking is infinitely better than carriage exercise. I know myself, that since I have taken to the habit of getting out of the carriage at the wells, and walking twice round the parterre, I feel myself braced and better for the day.

"It is not improbable but when the changes I thus suggest, and others similar to them, are enacted, that you will see to what little purpose a large house is maintained for the mere accommodation of a single individual, without suitable means, or indeed any reason whatever to dispense them. If then, I say, you should come to this conviction—at which I have already arrived—a very great saving might be effected by obtaining a tenant for Cro' Martin, while *you*, if still desirous of remaining in the county, might be most comfortably accommodated at the Hendersons'."

Three times did Mary Martin read over this passage before she could bring herself to believe in its meaning; and hot tears of sorrow coursed down her cheeks as she became assured of its import.

"It is not," went on the epistle—"it is not in your uncle's present most critical state that I could confer with him on this project, nor strengthen my advice by what most probably would be *his* also. I therefore make the appeal simply to your own sense of what you may think in accordance with our greatly increased outlay and your own requirements. Should you receive this suggestion in the spirit in which it is offered, I think that both for your uncle's satisfaction and your own dignity, the proposal ought to come from yourself. You could make it to me in a letter, stating all the reasons in its favour, and of course not omitting to lay suitable stress upon the isolation of your present life, and the comfort and security you would derive from the protection of a family. Mrs. H. is really a very nice person, and her tastes and habits would render her most companionable; and she would, of course, make you an object of especial attention and respect. It is, besides, not impossible that the daughter may soon return—though this is a point I have not leisure to enter upon at present. A hundred a year would be a very handsome allowance for Henderson, and indeed for that sum he ought to keep your pony, if you still continue your taste for equipage. You would thus be more comfortable, and really richer—that is, have more disposable means—than you have, hitherto, had. I forbear to insist further upon what—till it has your own approval—may be a vain advocacy on my part. I can only say, in conclusion, that in adopting this plan you would equally consult what is due t your own dignity, as what is required by your uncle's interests. Your cousin, I am forced to avow it, has been very silly, very inconsiderate, not alone in contracting heavy debts, but in raising large sums to meet them at fabulous rates of interest. The involvements threaten, from what I can gather, to imperil a considerable part of the estate, and we are obliged to send for Scanlan to come out here, and confer with him as to the means of extrication. I feel there is much to be said in palliation of errors which have their origin in high and generous qualities. Plantagenet was thrown at a very early age into the society of a most expensive regiment, and naturally contracted the tastes and habits around him. Poor fellow, he is suffering severely from the memory of these early indiscretions, and I see that nothing but a speedy settlement of his difficulties will ever restore him to his wonted spirits. You will thus perceive, that if my suggested change of life to you should not conform entirely to your wishes, that you are in reality only accepting your share of the sacrifices called for, from each of us.

"There are a great number of other matters on which I wished to touch—some, indeed, are not exactly within your province, such as the political fortunes of the borough, whose seat Mr. Massingbred has determined to vacate. Although not admitting the reason for his conduct, I am strongly convinced that the step is a mere acknowledgment of an error on his part, and an effort, however late, at the 'amende honorable.' The restitution, for so I am forced to regard it, comes most inopportunely, since it would be a most ill-chosen moment in which to incur the expense of a contested election; besides that, really your cousin has no desire whatever for Parliamentary honours. Plantagenet, however, would seem to have some especial intentions on the subject which he keeps secret, and has asked of Massingbred not to send off his farewell address to the constituency for some days. But I will not continue a theme so little attractive to you.

"Dr. Schubärt has just called to see your uncle. He is not altogether so satisfied with his state as I could have hoped; he advises change of scene, and a little more intercourse with the world, and we have some thought of Nice, if we cannot get on to Naples. Dr. S., to whom I spoke on the subject of your Irish miseries, tells me that cholera is now the most manageable of all maladies, if only taken early; that you must enjoin the persons attacked to a more liberal diet, no vegetables, and a sparing use of French wines, excepting, he says, the generous

'Vins du Midi.' There is also a mixture to be taken—of which he promised me the prescription—and a pill every night of arnica or aconite—I'm not quite certain which—but it is a perfect specific. He also adds, what must be felt as most reassuring, that the disease never attacks but the very poorest of the population. As to typhus, he smiled when I spoke of it. It is, he says, a mere 'Gastrite,' a malady which modern science actually despises. In fact, my dear niece, these would seem like all other Irish misfortunes, the mere offshoots of her own dark ignorance and barbarism. If it were not for the great expense—and of course that consideration decides the question—I should have requested you to send over your doctor here to confer with Dr. Schubärt. Indeed, I think it might be a very reasonable demand to make of the Government, but unhappily my present 'relations' with my relative Lord Reckington preclude any advances of mine in that quarter.

"I was forgetting to add, that with respect to cholera, and, indeed, fever generally, that Dr. S. lays great stress upon what he calls the moral treatment of the people, amusing their minds by easily-learned games and simple pleasures. I fear me, however, that the coarser natures of our population may not derive adequate amusement from the resources which would have such eminent success with the enlightened peasant of the Rhine land. Dr. S., I may remark, is a very distinguished writer on politics, and daily amazes us with the astounding speculations he is forming as to the future condition of Europe. His conviction is that our great peril is Turkey, and that Mahommedanism will be the religion of Europe before the end of the present century. Those new baths established at Brighton by a certain Hamet are a mere political agency, a secret propaganda, which his acuteness has alone penetrated. Miss Henderson has ventured to oppose these views with something not very far from impertinent ridicule, and for some time back, Dr. S. only discusses them with myself alone.

"I had left the remainder of the sheet for any intelligence that might occur before post hour, but I am suddenly called away, and shall close it at once. When I was sitting with your uncle a while ago, I *half* broached the project I was suggesting to you, and he seemed highly to approve of so much as I ventured to tell him. Nothing then is wanting but your own concurrence to make it as practicable, as it is deemed advisable, by your affectionate aunt,

"DOROTHEA MARTIN."

The eccentricities of her aunt's character had always served as extenuating circumstances with Mary Martin. She knew the violence of her prejudices, the enormous amount of her self-esteem, and the facility with which she was ever able to persuade herself that whatever she wished to do assumed at once all the importance and gravity of a duty! This thorough appreciation of her peculiarities enabled Mary to bear up patiently under many sore trials, and some actual wrongs. Where the occasion was a light one, she could afford to smile at such trials, and, even in serious cases, they palliated the injustice; but here was an instance wherein all her forgiveness was in vain. To take the moment of her poor uncle's illness—that terrible seizure, which left him without self-guidance, if even a will—to dictate these hard and humiliating terms, was a downright cruelty. Nor did it diminish the suffering which that letter cost her that its harsh conditions seemed dictated by a spirit of contempt for Ireland and its people. As Mary re-read the letter, she felt that every line breathed this tone of depreciation. It was to her ladyship a matter of less than indifference what became of the demesne, who inhabited the house—the home of "the Martins" for centuries! She was as little concerned for the prestige of "the old family," as she was interested for the sorrows of the people. If Mary endeavoured to treat these things dispassionately to her own heart, by dwelling upon all the points which affected others, still, her own individual wrong would work to the surface, and the bitter and insulting suggestion made to her rose up before her in all its enormity.

She did her very best to turn her thoughts into some other channel—to fix them upon her poor uncle, on his sick bed, and sorrowing as he was sure to be—to think of her cousin Harry, struggling against the embarrassments of his own imprudence—of the old housekeeper, Catty Broon, to whom she could not summon courage to speak the cruel tidings of her changed lot—but all—all in vain; back she would come to the humiliation that foreshadowed her own fortune, and threatened to depose her from her station for ever.

An indignant appeal to her uncle—her own father's brother—was her first resolve. "Let me learn," said she to herself, "from his own lips, that such is the destiny he assigns me—that, in return for my tried affection, my devotion, he has no other recompense than to lower me in self-esteem and condition together. Time enough, when assured of this, to decide upon what I shall do. But to whom shall I address this demand?" thought she again. "That dear, kind uncle, is now struck down by illness. It were worse than cruelty to add to his own sorrows, any thought of *mine.* If he have concurred in Lady Dorothea's suggestion, who knows in what light it may have been presented to him—by what arguments strengthened—with what perils contrasted? Is it impossible, too, that the sacrifice may be imperative? The sale of part of the property—the pressure of heavy claims—all show that it may be necessary to dispose of Cro' Martin. Oh!" exclaimed she, in agony, "it is but a year ago, that, when Mr. Repton hinted vaguely at such a casualty, how stoutly and indignantly did I reject it!

"'Your uncle may choose to live abroad,' said he; 'to sell the estate, perhaps.' And I heard him with almost scornful defiance; and now the hour is come! and even yet I cannot bring myself to believe it. When Repton drew the picture of the tenantry, forsaken and neglected, the poor unnoticed, and the sick uncared for, he still forgot to assign me my place in the sad 'tableau,' and show that in destitution my lot was equal to their own; the very poorest and meanest had yet some spot, poor and mean though it were, they called a home, that, Mary Martin was the only one an outcast!"

These gloomy thoughts were darkened as she bethought her that of her little fortune—on which, by Scanlan's aid, she had raised a loan—a mere fragment remained—a few hundred pounds at most. The outlay on hospitals, and medical assistance for the sick, had more than quadrupled what she had estimated. The expense once begun, she had persevered with almost reckless determination. She had despatched to Dublin, one by one, the few articles of jewellery and value she possessed for sale; she had limited her own expenditure to the very narrowest bounds, nor was it till driven by the utmost urgency that she wrote the appeal to her uncle of which the reader already knows.

"How I once envied Kate Henderson," cried she, aloud, "the brilliant accomplishments she possessed, the graceful charm that her cultivation threw over society, and the fascination she wielded, by acquirements of which I knew nothing; but how much more now do I envy her, that in those same gifts her independence was secured—that, high above the chances of the world, she could build upon her own efforts, and never descend to a condition of dependence!"

Her diminished power amongst the people had been fully compensated by the sincere love and affection she had won from them by acts of charity and devotion. Even these, however, owed much of their efficacy to the prestige of her station. No peasant in Europe puts so high a value on the intercourse with a rank above his own as does the Irish. The most pleasant flattery to his nature is the notice of "the Gentleman," and it was more than half the boon Mary bestowed upon the poor, that she who sat down beside the bed, who heated the little drink, who raised the head to swallow it, was the daughter of the Great House! Would not her altered fortune destroy this charm? was now her bitter reflection. Up to this hour, greatly reduced as were the means she dispensed, and the influence she wielded, she still lived in the proud home of her family, and all regarded her as the representative of her honoured name. But now—— No, she could not endure the thought! "If I must descend to further privations," said she to herself, "let me seek out some new scene—some spot where I am unknown, have never been heard of; there, at least, I shall be spared the contrast of the past with the present, nor see in every incident the cruel mockery of my former life.

"And yet," thought she, "how narrow-minded and selfish is all this—how mean-spirited, to limit the question to my own feelings. Is there no duty involved in this sacrifice? Shall I not still—reduced though I be in fortune—shall I not still be a source of comfort to many here? Will not the very fact of my presence assure them that they are not deserted? They have seen me under some trials, and the lesson has not been fruitless. Let them then behold me, under heavier ones, not dismayed nor cast down. What I lose in the prestige of station, I shall more than gain in sympathy; and so I remain!" No sooner was the resolve formed than all her wonted courage came back. Rallying with the stimulus of action before her, she began to plan out a new life, in which her relation to the people should be close and nearer than ever. There was a small ornamental cottage on the demesne, known as the Châlet, built by Lady Dorothea after one she had seen in the Oberland; this Mary now determined on for her home, and there, with Catty Broon alone, she resolved to live.

"My aunt," thought she, "can scarcely be so wedded to the Henderson scheme but that this will equally satisfy her wishes; and while it secures a home and a resting-place for poor Catty, it rescues *me* from what I should feel as a humiliation."

The day was already beginning to dawn as Mary sat down to answer Lady Dorothea's letter. Most of her reply referred to her uncle, to whose affection she clung all the more as her fortunes darkened. She saw all the embarrassment of proffering her services to nurse and tend him, living as he was amidst his own; but still, she said that of the journey or its difficulties she should never waste a thought, if her presence at his sick bed could afford him the slightest satisfaction. "He knows me as a nurse already," said she; "but tell him that I have grown, if not wiser, calmer, and quieter than he knew me formerly; that I should not disturb him by foolish stories, but sit patiently save when he would have me to talk. Tell him, too, that if changed in many things, in my love to *him*, I am unaltered." She tried to add more, but could not. The thought that these lines were to be read to her uncle by Lady Dorothea chilled her, and the very tones of that supercilious voice seemed to ring in her ears, and she imagined some haughty or insolent comment to follow them as they were uttered.

With regard to her own future, she, in a few words, remarked upon the unnecessary expense of maintaining a large house for the accomodation of a single person, and said that if her ladyship concurred in the plan, she would prefer taking up her home at the Châlet with old Catty for companion and housekeeper.

She pointed out the advantages of a change which, while securing a comfortable home to them, would equally suggest to their dependents lessons of thrift and self-sacrifice, and added, half sportively, "As for me, when I find myself *en Suisse*, I'm sure I shall less regret horses and dogs, and such like vanities, and take to the delights of a dairy and cream cheeses with a good grace. Indeed, I'm not quite certain but that Fortune, instead of displacing, will in reality be only installing me in the position best suited to me. Do not, then, be surprised, if a your return you find me in sabots and an embroidered bodic deep in the mystery of all cottage economics, and well conten to be so.

"You are quite right, my dear aunt," she continued, "not to entertain me with politics. The theme is as much above as it is distasteful to me; and so grovelling are my sentiments, that I'd rather hear of the arrival of a cargo of oatmeal at Kilkieran, than learn that the profoundest statesman of Great Britain had condescended to stand for our dear borough of Oughterard. At the same time, if Cousin Harry should change his mind, and turn his ambition towards the Senate, tell him I'm quite ready to turn out and canvass for him to-morrow, and that the hospitalities of the Châlet shall do honour to the cause. As you speak of sending for Mr. Scanlan, I leave to him to tell you all the events of our late assizes here—a task I escape from the more willingly, since I have no successes to record. Mr. Repton, however—he paid me a visit yesterday, and stopped here to dinner—says that he has no fears for the result at the next trial, and honestly confesses that our present defeat was entirely owing to the skill and ability of the counsel opposed to us. By some delay, or mistake, I don't exactly know which, Scanlan omitted to send a retainer to young Mr. Nelligan, and who, being employed for the other side, was the chief cause of our failure. My uncle will be pleased to learn that Mr. N.'s address to the jury was scrupulously free from any of that invective or attack so frequently levelled at landlords when defending the rights of property. Repton called it 'a model of legal argument, delivered with the eloquence of a first-rate speaker, and the taste and temper of a gentleman.' Indeed, I understand that the tone of the speech has rendered all the ribaldry usual on such occasions in local journals impossible, and that the young barrister has acquired anything but popularity in consequence. Even in this much, is there a dawn of better things; and under such circumstances a defeat may be more profitable than a victory."

With a few kind messages to her uncle, and an earnest entreaty for early tidings of his state, Mary concluded a letter in which her great difficulty lay in saying far less than her thoughts dictated, and conveying as much as she dare trust to Lady Dorothea's interpretation. The letter concluded and sealed, she lay down, dressed as she was, on her bed, and fell a-thinking over the future.

There are natures to whom the opening of any new vista in life suggests fully as much of pleasure as anxiety: the prospect of the unknown and the untried has something of the adventurous about it which more than counterbalances the casualties of a future. Such a temperament was hers; and the first sense of sorrowful indignation over, she really began to speculate upon her cottage life with a certain vague and dreamy enjoyment. She foresaw that when Cro' Martin Castle fell into other hands, that her own career ceased, her occupation was gone, and that she should at once fashion out some new road, and conform herself to new habits. The cares of her little household would probably not suffice to engage one whose active mind had hitherto embraced so wide a field of action, and Mary then bethought her how this leisure might be devoted to study and improvement. It was only in the eager enthusiasm of her many pursuits that she buried her sorrows over her neglected and imperfect education; and now a time was approaching when that reflection could no longer be resisted. She pondered long and deeply over these thoughts, when suddenly they were interrupted; but in what way deserves a chapter of its own—albeit a very brief one.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MR. MERL'S EXPERIENCES IN THE WEST.

"WHAT card is this?—who left it?" said Mary, as she took up one from her breakfast-table.

"It is a gentleman that came to the inn late last night, miss, and sent a boy over to ask when he could pay his respects at the castle.

"'Mr. Herman Merl'—a name I never heard of," muttered Mary to herself. "Doubtless some stranger wishing to see the house. Say, whenever he pleases, George; and order Sorrel to be ready, saddled and at the door, within an hour. This must be a busy day," said she, still speaking to herself, as the servant left the room. "At Oughterard before one; a meeting of the Loan Fund—I shall need some aid for my hospital; the Government order for the meal to be countersigned by a justice—Mr. Nelligan will do it. Then there's Taite's little boy to be balloted for in the Orphan House; and Cassidy's son to be sent up to Dublin. Poor fellow, he has a terrible operation to go through. And I shall need Priest Rafferty's name to this memorial from the widows; the Castle authorities seem to require it. After that, a visit to Kyle-a-Noe, to see all my poor sick folk: that will be a long business. I hope I may be able to get down to the shore and learn some tidings of poor Joan. She never leaves my thoughts, and yet I feel that no ill has befallen her."

"The gentleman that sent the card, miss, is below stairs. He is with Mr. Crow, at the hall-door," said George.

"Show him into the drawing-room, George, and tell Mr Crow to come here, I wish to speak to him." And before Mary had put away the papers and letters which littered the table, the artist entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Crow," said Mary, in return for a number of most courteous salutations, which he was performing in a small semicircle in front of her. "Who is your friend Mr. —'Mr. Herman Merl?'" read she, taking up the card.

"A friend of your cousin's, Miss Mary—of the captain's. He brought a letter from him; but he gave it to Scanlan, and somehow Mr. Maurice, I believe, forgot to deliver it."

"I have no recollection of it," said she, still assorting the papers before her. "What is this visit meant for—curiosity, pleasure, business? Does he wish to see the house?"

"I think it's Miss Martin herself he'd like to see," said Crow, half-slily.

"But why so? It's quite clear that I cannot show him any attentions. A young girl, living as I do here, cannot be expected to receive guests. Besides, I have other things to attend to. You must do the honours of Cro' Martin, Mr. Crow. You must entertain this gentleman for me. I'll order luncheon before I go out, and I'm sure you'll not refuse me this service."

"I wish I knew a real service to render you, Miss Mary," said he, with unfeigned devotedness in his look as he spoke.

"I think I could promise myself as much," said Mary, smiling kindly on him. "Do you happen to know anything of this stranger, Mr. Crow?"

"Nothing, miss, beyond seeing him this week back at Kilkieran."

"Oh, I have heard of him, then," broke in Mary. "It is of him the people tell me such stories of benevolence and goodness. It was he that sent the yawl out to Murran Island with oatmeal and potatoes for the poor. But I thought they called him Mr. Barry?"

"To be sure they do; and he's another guess man from him below stairs. This one here"—Mr. Crow now spoke in a whisper—"this one here is a Jew, I'd take the Testament on it, and I'd not be surprised if he was one of them thieving villains that they say robbed the captain! All the questions he does be asking about the property, and the rents, if they're well paid, and what arrears there are, shows me that he isn't here for nothing."

"I know nothing of what you allude to, Mr. Crow," said she, half proudly; "it would ill become *me* to pry into my cousin's affairs. At the same time, if the gentleman has no actual business with me, I shall decline to receive him."

"He says he has, miss," replied Crow. "He says that he wants to speak to you about a letter he got by yesterday's post from the captain."

Mary heard this announcement with evident impatience; her head was, indeed, too full of other cares to wish to occupy her attention with a ceremonial visit. She was in no mood to accept the unmeaning compliments of a new acquaintance, Shall we dare to insinuate, what after all is a mere suspicion on our part, that a casual glance at her pale cheeks, sunken eyes, and careworn features, had some share in the obstinacy of her refusal? She was not, indeed, "in looks," and she knew it. "Must I repeat it, Mr. Crow," said she, peevishly, "that you can do all this for me, and save me a world of trouble and inconvenience besides? If there should be, a very unlikely circumstance, anything confidential to communicate, this gentleman may write it." And with this she left the room, leaving poor Mr. Crow in a state of considerable embarrassment. Resolving to make the best of his difficulty, he returned to the drawing-room, and apologising to Merl for Miss Martin's absence on matters of great necessity, he conveyed her request that he would stop for luncheon.

"She an't afraid of me, I hope?" said Merl.

"I trust not. I rather suspect she is little subject to fear upon any score," replied Crow.

"Well, I must say it's not exactly what I expected. The letter I hold here from the captain gives me to understand that his cousin will not only receive me, but confer with and counsel me, too, in a somewhat important affair."

"Oh, I forgot," broke in Crow; "you are to write to her, she said—that is, if there really were anything of consequence, which you deemed confidential, you know—you were to write to her."

"I never put my hand to paper, Mr. Crow, without well knowing why. When Herman Merl signs anything, he takes time to consider what's in it," said the Jew, knowingly.

"Well, shall I show you the house—there are some clever specimens of the Dutch masters here?" asked Crow, anxious to change the topic.

"Ay, with all my heart. I suppose I must accept this privilege as my experience of the much-boasted Irish hospitality," said he, with a sneer, which required all Crow's self-control to resist answering. To master the temptation, and give himself a few moments' repose, he went about opening windows and drawing back curtains, so as to admit a fuller and stronger light upon the pictures along the walls.

"There now," said he, pointing to a large landscape, "there's a Both, and a fine one too; as mellow in colour and as soft in distance as ever he painted."

"That's a copy," said the other. "That picture was painted by Woeffel, and I'll show you his initials, too, A. W., before w leave it."

"It came from the Dordrecht gallery, and is an undoubted Both!" exclaimed Crow, angrily.

"I saw it there myself, and in very suitable company, too, with a Snyders on one side and a Rubens on t'other, the Snyders being a Faltk, and the Rubens a Metziger; the whole three being positively dear at twenty pounds. Ay, here it is," continued he, pointing to the hollow trunk of a decayed tree; "there's the initials. So much for your original by Both.

"I hope you'll allow that to be Mieris?" said Crow, passing on to another.

"If you hadn't opened the shutters perhaps I might," said Merl; "but with a good dash of light I see it is by Jansens—and a clever copy, too."

"A copy!" exclaimed the other.

"A good copy, I said. The King of Bavaria has the original It is in the small collection at Hohen Schwangau. There, that's good!" cried he, turning to a small unfinished sketch in oils.

"I often wondered who did it," cried Crow.

"That! Why, can you doubt, sir? That's a bit of Vandyke's own. It was one of the hundred and fifty rough things he threw off as studies for his great picture of St. Martin parting his cloak."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said Crow, in delight. "I felt, when I looked at it, that it was a great hand threw in them colours."

"You call this a Salvator Rosa, don't you?" said Merl, as he stood before a large piece representing a bandit's bivouac in a forest, with a pale moonlight stealing through the trees.

"Yes, that we do," said Crow, stoutly.

"Of course it's quite sufficient to have blended lights, rugged foregrounds, and plenty of action to make a Salvator; but let me tell you, sir; that it's not even a copy of him. It is a bad —ay, and a very bad—Haemlens—an Antwerp fellow that lived by poor fac-similes"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried Crow, despairingly. "Did I ever hear the like of this!"

"Are these your best things, Mr. Crow?" said Merl, surveying the room with an air of consummate depreciation.

"There are others. There are some portraits and a number of small cabinet pictures."

"Gerard Dows, and Jansens, and such like?" resumed Merl; "I understand: a mellow brown tint makes them, just as a glossy white satin petticoat makes a Terburg. Mr. Crow, you've caught a Tartar," said he, with a grin. "There's not a man in Europe can detect a copy from the original sooner than him before you. Now seven out of every eight of these here are veritable 'croûtes'—what we call 'croûtes,' sir—things sold at Christie's, and sent off to the continent to be hung up in old Châteaux in Flanders, or dilapidated villas in Italy, where your exploring Englishman discovers them by rare good luck, and brings them home with him as Cuyps, or Claudes, or Vandykes. I'll undertake," said he, looking around him—"I'll undertake to furnish you with a gallery, in every respect the duplicate of this, for—let me see—say three hundred pounds. Now, Mr. Crow," said Merl, taking a chair, and spreading out his legs before the fire, "will you candidly answer me one question?"

"Tell me what it is," said Crow, cautiously.

"I suppose by this time," said Merl, "you are tolerably well satisfied that Herman Merl is not very easily duped? I mean to say that at least there are *softer* fellows to be found than the humble individual who addresses you."

"I trust there are, indeed," said the other, sighing, "or it would be a mighty poor world for Simmy Crow and the likes of him."

"Well, I think so too," said Merl, chuckling to him. "The wideawake ones have rather the best of it. But, to come back to my question, I was simply going to ask you if the whole of the Martin estate, house, demesne, woods, gardens, quarries, farms, and fisheries, was not pretty much the same sort of thing as this here gallery?"

"How? What do you mean?" asked Crow, whose temper was barely, and with some difficulty, restrainable.

"I mean, in plain words, a regular humbug—that's all! and no more the representative of real value than these daubs here are the works of the great masters whose names they counterfeit."

"Look here, sir," said Crow, rising, and approaching the other with a face of angry indignation, "for aught I know, you may be right about these pictures. The chances are you are a dealer in such wares—at least you talk like one—but of the family that lived under this roof, and whose bread I have eaten for many a day, if you utter one word that even borders on disrespect—if you as much as hint at——"

What was to be the conclusion of Mr. Crow's menace we have no means of recording, for a servant, rushing in at the instant, summoned the artist with all speed to Miss Martin's presence. He found her, as he entered, with flushed cheeks and eyes flashing angrily, in one of the deep recesses of a window that looked out upon the lawn.

"Come here, sir," cried she, hurriedly—"come here, and behold a sight such as you scarcely ever thought to look upon from these windows. Look there." And she pointed to an assemblage of about a hundred people, many of whom were rudely armed with stakes, gathered around the chief entrance of the Castle. In the midst was a tall man, mounted upon a wretched horse, who seemed from his gestures to be haranguing the mob, and whom Crow speedily recognised to be Magennis of Barnagheela.

"What does all this mean?" asked he, in astonishment.

"It means this, sir," said she, grasping his arm and speaking in a voice thick from passionate eagerness. "That these people whom you see there have demanded the right to enter the house and search it from basement to roof. They are in quest of one that is missing, and although I have given my word of honour that none such is concealed here, they have dared to disbelieve me, and declare they will see for themselves. They might know me better," added she, with a bitter smile—"they might know me better, and that I no more utter a falsehood than I yield to a menace. See!" exclaimed she, "they are passing through the flower-garden—they are approaching the lower windows. Take a horse, Mr. Crow, and ride for Kiltimmon; there is a police-station there—bring up the force with you—lose no time, I entreat you."

"But how—leave you here all alone?"

"Have no fears on that score, sir," said she, proudly; "they may insult the roof that shelters me, to myself, they will offer no outrage. But be quick; away at once, and with speed."

Had Mr. Crow been, what it must be owned had been difficult, a worse horseman than he was, he would never have hesitated to obey this behest. Ere many minutes, therefore, he was in the saddle and flying across country at a pace such as he never imagined any energy could have exacted from him.

"They have got a ladder up to the windows of the large drawing-room, Miss Mary," said a servant; "they'll be in before many minutes."

Taking down two splendidly-ornamented pistols from above the chimneypiece, Mary examined the priming, and ordering the servant away, she descended by a small private stair to the drawing-room beneath. Scarcely, however, had she crossed the threshold than she was met by a man eagerly hurrying away. Stepping back in astonishment, and with a face pale as death, he exclaimed, "Is it Miss Martin?"

"Yes, sir," replied she, firmly; "and your name?"

"Mr. Merl—Herman Merl," said he, with a stealthy glance towards the windows, on the outside of which two fellows were now seated, communicating with those below.

"This is not a moment for much ceremony, sir," said she, promptly; "but you are here opportunely. These people will have it that I am harbouring here one that they are in pursuit of. I have assured them of their error, I have pledged my word of honour upon it, but they are not satisfied. They declare that they will search the house, and *I* as firmly declare they shall not."

"But the person is really not here?" broke in Merl.

"I have said so, sir," rejoined she, haughtily.

"Then why not let them search? Egad, *I*'d say, look away to your heart's content, pry into every hole and corner you please, only don't do any mischief to the furniture—don't let any——"

"I was about to ask your assistance, sir, but your counsel saves me from the false step. To one who proffers such wise advice, arguments like these"—and she pointed to the pistols—"arguments like these would be most distasteful; and yet let us see if others may not be of your mind too." And steadily aiming her weapon for a second or two, she sent a ball through the window, about a foot above the head of one of the fellows without. Scarcely had the report rung out and the splintering glass fallen, than the two men leaped to the ground, while a wild cheer, half derision, half anger, burst from the mob beneath. "Now, sir," continued she, with a smile of a very peculiar meaning, as she turned towards Merl—"now, sir, you will perceive that you have got into very indiscreet company, such as I'm sure Captain Martin's letter never prepared you for; and although it is not exactly in accordance with the usual notions of Irish hospitality to point to the door, perhaps you will be grateful to me when I say that you can escape by that corridor. It leads to a stair which will conduct you to the stable-yard. I'll order a saddle-horse for you. I suppose you ride?" And really the glance which accompanied these words was not a flattery.

However the proposition might have met Mr. Merl's wishes there is no means of knowing, for a tremendous crash now interrupted the colloquy, and the same instant the door of the drawing-room was burst open, and Magennis, followed by a number of country people, entered.

"I told you," cried he, rudely, "that I'd not be denied. It's your own fault if you would drive me to enter here by force."

"Well, sir, force has done it," said she, taking a seat as she spoke. "I am here alone, and you may be proud of the achievement!" The glance she directed towards Merl made that gentleman shrink back, and eventually slide noiselessly from the room, and escape from the scene altogether.

"If you'll send any one with me through the house, Miss Martin," began Magennis, ni a tone of much subdued meaning——

"No, sir," broke she in—"no, sir, I'll give no such order. You have already had my solemn word of honour, assuring you that there was not any one concealed here. The same incredulous disrespect you have shown to my word would accompany whatever direction I gave to my servants. Go wherever you please; for the time you are the master here. Mark me, sir," said she, as half crestfallen, and in evident shame, he was about to move from the room—"mark me, sir, if I feel sorry that one who calls himself a gentleman should dishonour his station by discrediting the word, the plighted word, of a lady, yet I can forgive much to him whose feelings are under the impulse of passion. But how shall I speak my contempt for *you*"—and she turned a withering look of scorn on the men who followed him—"for you, who have dared to come here to insult *me*—*I*, that if you had the least spark of honest manhood in your natures, you had died rather than have offended? Is this your requital for the part I have borne amongst you? Is it thus that you repay the devotion by which I have squandered all that I possessed, and would have given my life, too, for you and yours? Is it thus, think you, that your mothers, and wives, and sisters, would requite me? Or will they welcome you back from your day's work, and say, Bravely done? You have insulted a lone girl in her home, outraged the roof whence she never issued save to serve you, and taught her to believe that the taunts your enemies cast upon you, and which she once took as personal affronts to herself, that they are just and true, and as less than you merited. Go back, men," added she, in a voice trembling with emotion—"go back, while it is time. Go back in shame, and let me never know who has dared to offer me this insult!" And she hid her face between her hands, and bent down her head upon her lap. For several minutes she remained thus, overwhelmed and absorbed by intensely painful emotion, and when she lifted up her head, and looked around, they were gone! A solemn silence reigned on every side; not a word, nor a footfall, could be heard. She rushed to the window just in time to see a number of men slowly entering the wood, amidst whom she recognised Magennis, leading his horse by the bridle, and following the others, with bent-down head and sorrowful mien.

"Oh, thank Heaven for this!" cried she, passionately as the tears gushed out and coursed down her face. "Thank Heaven that they are not as others call them—cold-hearted and treacherous, craven in their hour of trial, and cruel in the day of their vengeance! I knew them better!" It was long before she could sufficiently subdue her emotion to think calmly of what had occurred. At last she bethought her of Mr. Merl, and despatched a servant in his pursuit, with a polite request that he would return. The man came up with Merl as he had reached the small gate of the park, but no persuasions, no entreaties, could prevail on that gentleman to retrace his steps; nay, he was frank enough to say, "He had seen quite enough the West," and to invoke something very unlike benediction on his head if he ever passed another day in Galway.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MR. MERL'S "LAST" IRISH IMPRESSION.

Never once turning his head towards Cro' Martin, Mr. Merl set out for Oughterard, where, weary and footsore, he arrived that same evening. His first care was to take some refreshment, his next to order horses for Dublin early for the following morning. This done, he sat down to write to Captain Martin, to convey to him what Merl designated as a "piece of his mind," a phrase which in popular currency is always understood to imply the very reverse of any flattery. The truth was, Mr. Merl began to suspect that his Irish liens were a very bad investment, that property in that country was held under something like a double title—the one conferred by law, the other maintained by a resolute spirit and a stout heart; that parchments required to be seconded by pistols, and that he who owned an estate must always hold himself in readiness to fight for it.

Now these were all very unpalatable considerations. They rendered possession perilous, they made sale almost impossible. In the cant phrase of Ceylon, the captain had sold him a wild elephant; or, to speak less figuratively, disposed of what he well knew the purchaser could never avail himself of. If Mr. Merl was an emblem of blandness and good temper at the play-table, courteous and conceding at every incident of the game, it was upon the very wise calculation that the politeness was profitable. The little irregularities that he pardoned all gave him an insight into the character of his antagonists, and where he appeared to have lost a battle, he had gained more than a victory in knowledge of the enemy.

These blandishments were, however, no real part of the man's natural temperament which was eminently distrustful and suspicious, wary to detect a blot, prompt and sharp to hit it. A vague, undefined impression had now come over him that the captain had overreached him; that even if unencumbered—which was far from the case—this same estate was like a forfeited territory, which, to own, a man must assert his mastery with the strong hand of force. "I should like to see myself settling down amongst these savages," thought he, "collecting my rents with dragoons, or levying a fine with artillery. Property, indeed! You might as well convey to to me by bill of sale the right over a drove of wild buffaloes in South America, or give me a title to a given number of tigers in Bengal. He'd be a bold man that would even venture to come and have a look at 'his own.'"

It was in this spirit, therefore, that he composed his epistle, which assuredly lacked nothing on the score of frankness and candour. All his "Irish impressions" had been unfavourable. He had eaten badly, he had slept worse; the travelling was rude, the climate detestable; and, lastly, where he had expected to have been charmed with the ready wit, and amused with the racy humour of the people, he had only been terrified—terrified almost to death—by their wild demeanour, and a ferocity that made his heart quake. "Your cousin," said he—"your cousin, whom, by the way, I only saw for a few minutes, seemed admirably adapted to the exigencies of the social state around her; and although ball practice has not been included amongst the ordinary items of young ladies' acquirements, I am satisfied that it might advantageously form part of an Irish education.

"As to your offer of a seat in Parliament, I can only say," continued he, "that as the Member of Oughterard I should always feel as though I were seated over a barrel of gunpowder, while the very idea of meeting my constituency makes me shudder. I am, however, quite sensible of the honour intended me, both upon that score and in your proposal of my taking up my residence at Cro' Martin. The social elevation, and so forth, to ensue from such a course of proceeding would have this disadvantage—it would not pay! No, Captain Martin, the settlement between us must stand upon another basis—the very simple and matter-of-fact one called £ *s. d.* I shall leave this to-morrow, and be in town, I hope, by Wednesday; you can, therefore, give your man of business, Mr. Saunders, his instructions to meet me at Wimpole's, and state what terms of liquidation he is prepared to offer. Suffice it for the present to say, that I decline any arrangement which should transfer to me any portion of the estate. I declare to you, frankly, I'd not accept the whole of it on the condition of retaining the proprietorship."

When Mr. Merl had just penned the last sentence, the door slowly and cautiously was opened behind him, and a very much carbuncled face protruded into the room. "Yes, that's himself," muttered a voice, and ere Merl had been able to detect the speaker, the door was closed. These casual interruptions to his privacy had so frequently occurred since the commencement of his tour, that he only included them amongst his other Irish "disagreeables;" and so he was preparing to enter on another paragraph when a very decisive knock at the door startled him, and before he could say "Come in," a tall, red-faced, vulgar-looking man, somewhat stooped in the shoulders, and with that blear-eyed watery expression so distinctive in hard drinkers, slowly entered, and shutting the door behind him, advanced to the fire.

"My name, sir, is Brierley," said he, with a full, rich brogue

"Brierley—Brierley—never heard of Brierley before," said Mr. Merl, affecting a flippant ease that was very remote from his heart.

"Better late than never, sir," rejoined the other, coolly seating himself, and crossing his arms on his breast. "I have come here on the part of my friend Tom—Mr. Magennis, I mean—of Barnagheela, who told me to track you out."

"Much obliged, I'm sure, for the attention," said Merl, with an assumed smartness.

"That's all right—so you should," continued Brierley. "Tom told me that you were present at Cro' Martin when he was outraged and insulted—by a female, of course, or he wouldn't be making a complaint of it now—and as he is not the man that ever lay under a thing of the kind, or ever will, he sent me here to you, to arrange where you'd like to have it, and when."

"To have what?" asked Merl, with a look of unfeigned terror.

"Baythershin! how dull we are," said Mr. Brierley, with a finger to his very red nose. Sure it's not thinking of the King's Bench you are, that you want me to speak clearer."

"I want to know your meaning, sir—if you have a meaning."

"Be cool honey—keep yourself cool. Without you happen to find that warmth raises your heart, I'd say again, be cool.

I've one simple question to ask you"—here he dropped his voice to a low, cautious whisper—"Will ye blaze?"

"Will I what?" cried Merl.

Mr. Brierley arose, and drawing himself up to his full height, extended his arm in the attitude of one taking aim with a pistol. "Eh!" cried he, "you comprehend me now, don't you?"

"Fight—fight a duel!" exclaimed Merl, aloud.

"Whisht! whisht! speak lower," said Brierley; "there's maybe, a chap listening at the door this minute!"

Accepting the intimation in a very different spirit from that in which it was offered, Merl rushed to the door, and threw it wide open. "Waiter!—landlord!—house!—waiter!" screamed he, at the top of his voice. And in an instant three or four slovenly-looking fellows, with dirty napkins in dirtier hands, surrounded him.

"What is it, your honer?—what is it?" asked they, in a breath.

"Don't you hear what the gentleman's asking for?" said Brierley, with a half serious face. "He wants a chaise to the door as quick as lightning. He's off this minute."

"Yes, by Jupiter! that I am," said Merl, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"Take your last look at the West, dear, as you pass the Shannon, for I don't think you'll ever come so far again," said Brierley, with a grin, as he moved by him to descend the stairs.

"If I do, may——" But the slam of his room-door, and the rattle of the key as he locked it, cut short Mr. Merl's denunciation.

In less than half-an-hour afterwards a yellow post-chaise left the "Martin Arms" at full speed, a wild yell of insult and derision greeting it as it swept by, showing how the Oughterard public appreciated its inmate!

CHAPTER XLIX.

SOMETHING NOT EXACTLY FLIRTATION.

Most travelled reader, have you ever stood upon the plateau at the foot of the Alten-Schloss in Baden, just before sunset. and seen the golden glory spread out like a sheen over the vast plain beneath you, with waving forests, the meandering Rhine, and the blue Vosges mountains beyond all? It is a noble landscape, where every feature is bold, and throughout which light and shade alternate in broad, effective masses, showing that you are gazing on a scene of great extent, and taking in miles of country with your eye. It is essentially German, too, in its characteristics. The swelling undulations of the soil, the deep, dark forests, the picturesque homesteads, with shadowy eaves and carved quaint balconies, the great gigantic wagons slowly toiling through the narrow lanes, over which the "Lindens" spread a leafy canopy, all are of the Vaterland.

Some fancied resemblance—it was in reality no more—to a view from a window at Cro' Martin had especially endeared this spot to Martin, who regularly was carried up each evening to pass an hour or so, dreaming away in that half-unconsciousness to which his malady had reduced him. There he sat, scarcely a remnant of his former self, a leaden dulness in his eye, and a massive immobility in the features which once were plastic with every passing mood that stirred him. The clasped hands and slightly bent-down head gave a character of patient, unresisting meaning to his figure, which the few words he dropped from time to time seemed to confirm.

At a little distance off, and on the very verge of the cliff, Kate Henderson was seated sketching, and behind her, occasionally turning to walk up and down the terraced space, was Massingbred, once more in full health, and bearing in appearance the signs of his old, impatient humour. Throwing away his half-smoked cigar, and with a face whose expression betokened the very opposite of all calm and ease of mind, he drew nigh to where she sat, and watched her over her shoulder. For a while she worked away without noticing his presence. At last she turned slightly about, and looking up at him, said, "You see, it's very nearly finished."

"Well, and what then?" asked he, bluntly.

"Do you forget that I gave you until that time to change your opinion? that when I was shadowing in this foreground I said, 'Wait till I have done this sketch, and see if you be of the same mind,' and you agreed?"

"This might be very pleasant trifling if nothing were at stake, Miss Henderson," said he; "but remember that I cannot hold all my worldly chances as cheaply as *you* seem to do them."

"Light another cigar, and sit down here beside me—I don't dislike smoke, and it may perchance be a peace calumet between us—and let us talk, if possible, reasonably and calmly."

He obeyed like one who seemed to feel that her word was a command, and sat down on the cliff at her side.

"There, now," said she, "be useful; hold that colour-case for me, and give me your most critical counsel. Do you like my sketch?"

"Very much indeed."

"Where do you find fault with it? There must be a fault, or your criticism is worth nothing."

"It's greatest blemish in my eyes is the time it has occupied you. Since you began it you have very rarely condescended to speak of anything else."

"A most unjust speech, and an ungrateful one. It was when throwing in those trees yonder, I persuaded you to recal your farewell address to your borough friends; it was the same day that I sketched that figure there, that I showed you the great mistake of your present life. There is no greater error, believe me, than supposing that a Parliamentary success, like a social one, can be achieved by mere brilliancy. Party is an army and you must serve in the ranks before you can wear your epaulets."

"I have told you already—I tell you again—I'm tired of the theme that has myself alone for its object."

"Of whom would you speak, then?" said she, still intently busied with her drawing.

"You ask me when you know well of whom," said he, hurriedly. "Nay, no menaces; I could not if I would be silent. It is impossible for me any longer to continue this struggle with myself. Here now, before I leave this spot, you shall answer me——" He stopped suddenly, as though he had said more than he intended, or more than he well knew how to continue.

"Go on," said she, calmly. And her fingers never trembled as they held the brush.

"I confess I do envy that tranquil spirit of yours," said he, bitterly. "It is such a triumph to be calm, cold, and impassive at a moment when others feel their reason tottering and their brain a chaos."

"There is nothing so easy, sir," said she, proudly. "All that I can boast of is not to have indulged in illusions which seem to have a charm for *you*. You say you want explicitness. You shall have it. There was one condition on which I offered you my friendship and my advice. You accepted the bargain, and we were friends. After a while you came and said that you rued your compact; that you discovered your feelings for me went further; that mere friendship, as you phrased it, would not suffice——"

"I told you, rather," broke he in, "that I wished to put that feeling to the last test, by linking your fortune with my own for ever."

"Very well, I accept that version. You offered to make me your wife, and in return, I asked you to retract your words—to suffer our relations to continue on their old footing, nor subject me to the necessity of an explanation painful to both of us. For a while you consented, now, you seem impatient at your concession, and ask me to resume the subject. Be it so—but for the last time."

Massingbred's cheeks grew deadly pale, but he never uttered a word.

After a second's pause, she resumed: "Your affections are less engaged in this case than you think. You would make me your wife just as you would do anything else that gave a bold defiance to the world, to show a consciousness of your own power, to break down any obstacle, and make the prejudices or opinions of society give way before you. You have energy and self-esteem enough to make this succeed. Your wife—albeit the steward's daughter—the governess! would be received, invited, visited, and the rest of it; and so far as *you* were concerned the triumph would be complete. Now, however, turn a little attention to the other side of the medal. What is to requite *me* for all this courtesy on sufferance—all this mockery of consideration? Where am I to find my friendships—where even discover my duties? You only know of one kind of pride, that of station and social eminence. I can tell you there is another, loftier far—the consciousness that no inequality of position can obliterate what I feel and know in myself of superiority to those fine ladies, whose favourable notice you would entreat for me. Smile at the vanity of this declaration if you like, sir, but at least own that I am consistent, for I am prouder in the independence of my present dependence than I should be in all the state of Mr. Massingbred's wife. You can see, therefore, that I could not accept this change as the great elevation you would deem it. You would be stooping to raise one who could never persuade herself that she was exalted. I am well aware that inequality of one sort or another is the condition of most marriages. The rank of one compensates for the wealth of the other. Here, it is affluence and age, there, it is beauty and poverty. People treat the question in a good commercial spirit, and balance the profit and loss like tradesfolk; but even in this sense our compact would be impossible, since *you* would endow me with what has no value in my eyes, and *I*, worse off still, have absolutely nothing to give in return."

"Give me your love, dearest Kate," cried he, "and, supported by that, you shall see that I deserve it. Believe me, it is your own proud spirit that exaggerates the difficulties that would await us in society."

"I should scorn myself if I thought of them," broke she in, haughtily; "and remember, sir, these are not the words of one who speaks in ignorance. I, too, have seen that great world, on which your affections are so fixed. I have mixed with it, and know it. Notwithstanding all the cant of moralists, I do not believe it to be more hollow, or more heartless than other classes. Its great besetting sin is not of self-growth, for it comes of the slavish adulation offered by those beneath it, the grovelling worship of the would-be fine folk, who would leave friends, and home, and hearth, to be admitted even to the antechambers of the great. They who offer up this incense are in my eyes far more despicable than they who accept the sacrifice;

but I would not cast my lot with either. Do not smile, sir, as if these were high-flown sentiments; they are the veriest commonplaces of one who loves commonplace, who neither seeks affections with coronets nor friendships in gold coaches, but who would still less be of that herd—mute, astonished, and awe-struck—who worship them!"

"You deem me, then, deficient in this same independence of spirit?" cried Massingbred, half indignantly.

"I certainly do not accept your intention of marrying beneath you as a proof of it. Must I again tell you, sir, that in such cases it is the poor, weak, patient, forgotten woman pays all the penalty, and that, in the very conflict with the world, the man has his reward?"

"If you loved me, Kate," said he, in a tone of deep sorrow, "it is not thus you would discuss this question."

She made no reply, but bending down lower over her drawing, worked away with increased rapidity.

"Still," cried he, passionately, "I am not to be deterred by a defeat. Tell me, at least, how I can win that love, which is to me the great prize of life. You read my faults, you see my short-comings clearly enough, be equally just, then, to anything there is of good or hopeful about me. Do this, Kate, and I will put my fate upon the issue."

"In plain words," said she, calmly, "you ask me what manner of man I would consent to marry. I'll tell you. One who with ability enough to attain any station, and talents to gain any eminence, has lived satisfied with that in which he was born; one who has made the independence of his character so felt by the world that his actions have been regarded as standards, a man of honour and of his word; employing his knowledge of life, not for the purposes of overreaching, but for self-correction and improvement; well bred enough to be a peer, simple as a peasant; such a man, in fact, as could afford to marry a governess, and while elevating her to his station, never compromise his own with his equals. I don't flatter myself," said she, smiling, "that I'm likely to draw this prize, but I console myself by thinking that I could not accept aught beneath it, as great fortune. I see, sir, the humility of my pretensions amuses you, and it is all the better for both of us if we can treat these things jestingly."

"Nay, Kate, you are unfair—unjust," broke in Massingbred.

"Mr. Martin begins to feel it chilly, Miss Henderson," said a servant at this moment. "Shall we return to the hotel?"

"Yes, by all means," said she, rising hastily. The next instant she was busily engaged shawling and muffling the sick man, who accepted her attentions with the submissiveness of a child.

"That will do, Molly; thank you, darling," said he, in a feeble voice; "you are so kind, so good to me."

"The evening is fresh, sir, almost cold," said she.

"Yes, dear, the climate is not what it used to be. We have cut down too many of those trees, Molly, yonder." And he pointed with his thin fingers towards the Rhine. "We have thinned the wood overmuch, but they'll grow again, dear, though I shall not be here to see them."

"He thinks I am his niece," whispered Kate, "and fancies himself at Cro' Martin."

"I suppose they'll advise my trying a warm country, Molly, a milder air," muttered he, as they slowly carried him along. "But home, after all, is home; one likes to see the old faces and the old objects around them—all the more when about to leave them for ever!" And as the last words came, two heavy tears stole slowly along his cheeks, and his pale lips quivered with emotion. Now, speaking in a low, weak voice to himself, now, sighing heavily as though in deep depression, he was borne along towards the hotel. Nor did the gay and noisy groups which thronged the thoroughfares arouse him. He saw them, but seemed not to heed them. His dreary gaze wandered over the brilliant panorama without interest or speculation. Some painful and difficult thoughts, perhaps, did all these unaccustomed sights and sounds bring across his mind, embarrassing him to reconcile their presence with the scene he fancied himself beholding; but even these impressions were faint and fleeting.

As they turned to cross the little rustic bridge in front of the hotel, a knot of persons moved off the path to make way for them, one of whom fixed his eyes steadily on the sick man, gazing with the keen scrutiny of intense interest; then suddenly recalling himself to recollection, he hastily retreated within the group.

"You are right," muttered he to one near him, "he *is* 'booked;' my bond will come due before the month ends."

"And you'll be an estated gent, Herman, eh?" said a very dark-eyed, hook-nosed man at his side.

"Well, I hope I shall act the part as well as my neighbours," said Mr. Merl, with that mingled assurance and humility that made up his manner.

"Wasn't that Massingbred that followed them—he that made the famous speech the other day in Parliament?"

"Yes," said Merl. "I've got a bit of 'stiff' with his endorsement in my pocket this minute for one hundred and fifty."

"What's it worth, Merl?"

"Perhaps ten shillings, but I'd not part with it quite so cheaply. He'll not always be an M.P., and we shall see if he can afford to swagger by an old acquaintance without so much as a 'How d'ye do?'"

"There, he is coming back again," said the other. And at the same moment Massingbred walked slowly up to the spot, his easy smile upon his face, and his whole expression that of a careless, unburdened nature.

"I just caught a glimpse of you as I passed, Merl," said he, with a familiar nod; "and you were exactly the man I wanted to see."

"Too much honour, sir," said Merl, affecting a degree of haughty distance at the familiarity of this address.

Massingbred smiled at the mock dignity, and went on: "I have something to say to you. Will you give me a call this evening at the Cour de Bade, say about nine or half-past?"

"I have an engagement this evening."

"Put it off, then, that's all, Master Merl, for mine is an important matter, and very nearly concerns yourself."

Merl was silent. He would have liked much to display before his friends a little of the easy dash and swagger that he had just been exhibiting, to have shown them how cavalierly he could treat a rising statesman and a young Parliamentary star of the first order; but the question crossed him, Was it safe? what might the luxury cost him? "Am I to bring that little acceptance of yours along with me?" said he, in a half whisper, while a malicious sparkle twinkled in his eye.

"Why not, man? Certainly, if it gives you the least pleasure in life; only don't be later than half-past nine." And with one of his sauciest laughs Massingbred moved away, leaving the Jew very far from content with "the situation."

Merl, however, soon rallied. He had been amusing his friends, just before this interruption, with a narrative of his Irish journey: he now resumed the theme. All that he found faulty, all even that he deemed new, or strange, or unintelligible in that unhappy country, he had dressed up in the charming colours of his cockney vocabulary, and his hearers were worthy of him! There is but little temptation, however, to linger in their company, and so we leave them.

CHAPTER L.

LADY DOROTHEA.

The Cour de Bade, at which excellent hotel the Martins were installed, received on the day we have just chronicled a new arrival. He had come by the dilligence, one of that undistinguishable ten thousand England sends off every week from her shores to represent her virtues or her vices, her oddities, vulgarities, and pretensions to the critical eyes of continental Europe.

Perfectly innocent of any foreign language, and with a delightful ambiguity as to the precise geography of where he stood, he succeeded, after some few failures, in finding out where the Martins stopped, and had now sent up his name to Lady Dorothea, that name being "Mr. Maurice Scanlan."

Lady Dorothea Martin had given positive orders that except in the particular case of this individual she was not to be interrupted by any visitor. She glanced her eye at the card, and then handed it across the table to her son, who coolly read it, and threw it from him with the air of one saying to himself, "Here's more of it! more complication, more investigation, deeper research into my miserable difficulties, and consequently more unhappiness." The table at which they were seated was thickly covered with parchments, papers, documents, and letters of every shape and size. There were deeds, and bonds, and leases, rent-rolls, and valuations, and powers of attorney, and all the other imposing accessories of estated property. There were also voluminous bills of costs, formidable long columns of figures, "carried over" and "carried over" till the very eye of the reader wearied of the dread numerals and turned recklessly to meet the awful total at the bottom! Terrified by the menacing applications addressed to Mr. Martin on his son's account, and which arrived by every post, Lady Dorothea had resolved upon herself entering upon the whole state of the captain's liabilities, as well as the complicated questions of the property generally.

Distrust of her own powers was not in the number of her ladyship's defects. Sufficiently affluent to be always able to surround herself with competent subordinates, she fancied—a not very uncommon error, by the way—that she individually accomplished all that she had obtained through another. Her taste in the fine arts, her skill in music, her excellence as a letter-writer were all accomplishments in this wise; and it is not improbable that, had she been satisfied to accept her success in finance through a similar channel, the result might have proved just as fortunate. A shrinking dislike, however, to expose the moneyed circumstances of the family, and a feeling of dread as to the possible disclosures which should come out, prevented her from accepting such co-operation. She had, therefore, addressed herself to the task with no other aid than that of her son—a partnership, it must be owned, which relieved her very little of her burden!

Had the captain been called away from the pleasures and amusements of life to investigate the dry records of some far-away cousin's embarrassments—to dive into the wearisome narrative of money-borrowing, bill-renewing, and the rest of it, by one whom he had scarcely known or seen—his manner and bearing could not possibly have betrayed stronger signs of utter weariness and apathy than he now exhibited. Smoking his cigar, and trimming his nails with a very magnificent penknife, he gave short and listless replies to her ladyship's queries, and did but glance at the papers which from time to time she handed to him for explanation or inquiry.

"So he is come at last!" exclaimed she, as the captain threw down the visiting-card. "Shall we see him at once?"

"By Jove! I think we've had enough of 'business,' as they call it, for one morning," cried he. "Here have we been since a little after eleven, and it is now four, and I am as sick of accounts and figures as though I were a Treasury clerk."

"We have done next to nothing after all!" said she, peevishly.

"And I told you as much when you began," said he, lighting a fresh cigar. "There's no seeing one's way through these kind of things after the lapse of a year or two. Fordyce gets hold of the bills you gave Mossop, and Rawkins buys up some of the things you had given renewals for, and then, all that trash you took in part payment of your acceptances, turns up, some day or other, to be paid for; and what between the bills that never were to be negotiated—but somehow do get abroad—and the sums sent to meet others applied in quite a different direction, I'll lay eighty to fifty in tens or ponies there's no gentleman living ever mastered one of these embarrassments. One must be bred to it, my lady, take my word for it. It's like being a crack rider, or a poet—it's born with a man. 'The Henderson,'" added he, after a pause, "she can do it, and I should like to see what she couldn't!"

"I am curious to learn how you became acquainted with these financial abilities of Miss Henderson?" said Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"Simply enough. I was poring over these confounded accounts one day at Manheim, and I chanced to ask her a question—something about compound interest, I think it was—and so she came and looked over what I was doing, or rather endeavouring to do. It was that affair with Throgmorton, where I was to meet one third of the bills, and Merl and he were to look to the remainder; but there was a reservation that if Comus won the Oaks, I was to stand free—no that's not it—if Comus won the double event——"

"Never mind your stupid contract. What of Miss Henderson?" broke in Lady Dorothea.

"Well, she came over, as I told you, and took up a pencil and began working away with all sorts of signs and crosses—regular algebra, by Jove!—and in about five minutes out came the whole thing, all square, showing that I stood to win on either event, and came off splendidly if the double should turn up. 'I wish,' said I to her, 'you'd just run your eye over my book and see how I stand.' She took it over to the fire, and before I could well believe she had glanced at it, she said, 'This is all full of blunders. You have left yourself open to three casualties, any one of which will sweep away all your winnings. Take the odds on Roehampton, and lay on Slingsby a couple of hundred more—three, if you can get it—and you'll be safe enough. And when you've done that,' said she, 'I have another piece of counsel to give; but first say will you take it?' 'I give you my word upon it,' said I. 'Then it is this,' said she: 'make no more wagers on the turf. You haven't skill to make what is called a "good book," and you'll always be a sufferer.'"

"Didn't she vouchsafe to offer you her admirable assistance?" asked her ladyship, with a sneer.

"No, by Jove!" said he, not noticing the tone of sarcasm; "and when I asked her, 'Would not she afford me a little aid?' she quickly said, 'Not on any account. You are now in a difficulty, and I willingly come forward to extricate you. Far different were the case should I conspire with you to place others in a similar predicament. Besides, I have your pledge that you have now done with these transactions, and for ever.'"

"What an admirable monitor. One only wonders how so much morality coexists with such very intimate knowledge of ignoble pursuits."

"By Jove! she knows everything," broke in the captain. "Such a canter as she gave me t'other morning about idleness and the rest of it, saying how I ought to study Hindostanee, and get a staff appointment, and so on—that every one ought to place himself above the accidents of fortune; and when I said something about having no opportunity at hand, she replied, 'Never complain of that; begin with *me.* I know quite enough to initiate you; and as to sanscrit, I'm rather "up" in it.'"

"I trust you accepted the offer?" said her ladyship, with an ambiguous smile.

"Well, I can't say I did. I hate work—at least that kind of work. Besides, one doesn't like to come out 'stupid' in these kind of things, and so I merely said, 'I'd think of it—very kind of her,' and so on."

"Did it never occur to you all this while," began her ladyship; and then suddenly correcting herself, she stopped short, and said, "By the way, Mr. Scanlan is waiting for his answer. Ring the bell, and let him come in."

Perhaps it was the imperfect recollection of that eminent individual—perhaps the altered circumstances in which she now saw him, and possibly some actual changes in the man himself—but really Lady Dorothea almost started with surprise as he entered the room, dressed in a dark pelisse, richly braided and frogged, an embroidered travelling-cap in his hand, and an incipient moustache on his upper lip—all evidencing how rapidly he had turned his foreign experiences to advantage. There was, too, in his address a certain confident assurance that told how quickly the habits of the "Table d'hôte" had impressed him, and how instantaneously his nature had imbibed the vulgar ease of the "continent."

"You have just arrived, Mr. Scanlan?" said her ladyship, haughtily, and not a little provoked at the shake-hand salutation her son had accorded him.

"Yes, my lady, this instant, and such a journey as we've had! No water on the Rhine for the steamers; and then, when we took to the land, a perfect deluge of rain, that nearly swept us away. At Eisleben, or some such name, we had an upset."

"What day did you leave Ireland?" asked she, in utter indifference as to the casualty.

"Tuesday fortnight last, my lady. I was detained two days in Dublin making searches——"

"Have you brought us any letters, sir?"

"One from Miss Mary, my lady, and another from Mr. Repton—very pressing he said it was. I hope Mr. Martin is better? Your ladyship's last——"

"Not much improvement," said she, stiffly, while her thin lips were compressed with an expression that might mean pride, or sorrow, or both.

"And the country, sir? How did you leave it looking?"

"Pretty well, my lady. More frightened than hurt, as a body might say. They've had a severe winter, and a great deal of sickness; the rains, too, have done a deal of mischief; but on the whole matters are looking up again."

"Will the rents be paid, sir?" asked she, sharply.

"Indeed, I hope so, my lady. Some, of course, will be backward, and beg for time, and a few more will take advantage of Magennis's success, and strive to fight us off."

"There must have been some gross mismanagement in that business, sir," broke in her ladyship. "Had I been at home, I promise you the matter would have ended differently."

"Mr. Repton directed all the proceedings himself, my lady. He conferred with Miss Mary."

"What could a young lady know about such matters?" said she, angrily. "Any prospect of a tenant for the house, sir?"

"If your ladyship really decides on not going back——"

"Not the slightest intention of doing so, sir. If it depended upon *me*, I'd rather pull it down and sell the materials than return to live there. You know yourself, sir, the utter barbarism we were obliged to submit to. No intercourse with the world—no society—very frequently no communication by post. Surrounded by a set of ragged creatures, all importunity and idleness, at one moment all defiance and insolence, at the next, crawling and abject. But it is really a theme I cannot dwell upon. Give me your letters, sir, and let me see you this evening." And taking the papers from his hand, she swept out of the room in a haughty state.

The captain and Mr. Scanlan exchanged looks, and were silent, but their glances were far more intelligible than aught either of them would have ventured to say aloud: and when the attorney's eyes, having followed her ladyship to the door, turned and rested on the captain, the other gave a brief short nod of assent, as though to say: "Yes, you are right; she's just the same as ever."

"And *you*, captain," said Scanlan, in his tone of natural familiarity, "how is the world treating *you?*"

"Devilish badly, Master Scanlan."

"Why, what is it doing then?"

"I'll tell you what it's doing! It's charging me fifty—ay, sixty per cent.; it's protesting my bills, stimulating my blessed creditors to proceed against me, worrying my very life out of me with letters. Letters to the governor, letters to the Horse Guards, and, last of all, it has just lamed Bonesetter, the horse 'I stood to win' on for the Chester Cup. I wouldn't have taken four thousand for my book yesterday morning!"

"Bad news all this."

"I believe you," said he, lighting a cigar, and throwing another across the table to Scanlan. "It's just bad news, and I have nothing else for many a long day past. A fellow of your sort, Master Maurice, punting away at county races and small sweepstakes, has a precious deal better time of it than a captain of the King's Hussars with his head and shoulders in the Fleet."

"Come, come, who knows but luck will turn, captain? Make a book on the Oaks."

"I've done it; and I'm in for it, too," said the other, savagely.

"Raise a few thousands, you can always sell a reversion."

"I have done that also," said he, still more angrily.

"With your position and advantages you could always marry well. If you'd just beat up the manufacturing districts, you'd get your eighty thousand as sure as I'm here! And then matrimony admits of a man's changing all his habits. He can sell off hunters, get rid of a racing stable, and twenty other little embarrassments, and only gain character by the economy."

"I don't care a brass farthing for that part of the matter, Scanlan. No man shall dictate to me how I'm to spend my money. Do you just find me the tin, and I'll find the talent to scatter it."

"If it can't be done by a post-obit——"

"I tell you, sir," cried Martin, peevishly, "as I have told you before, that has been done. There is such a thing as pumping a well dry, isn't there?"

Scanlan made a sudden exclamation of horror; and, after a pause, said, "Already!"

"Ay, sir, already!"

"I had my suspicions about it," muttered Scanlan, gloomily.

"You had? And how so, may I beg to ask?" said Martin, angrily.

"I saw him down there, myself."

"Saw whom? Whom are you talking of?"

"Of that Jew, of course. Mr. Merl he calls himself."

A faint groan was all Martin's reply, as he turned away to hide his face.

Scanlan watched him for a minute or so, and then resumed: "I guessed at once what he was at; *he* never deceived *me*, talking about snipe and woodcocks, and pretending to care about hare-hunting. I saw my man at a glance. 'It's not sporting ever brought you down to these parts,' said I. '*Your* game is young fellows, hard up for cash, willing to give up their birthright for a few thousands down, and never giving a second thought whether they paid twenty per cent. or a hundred and twenty.' Well, well, captain, you ought to have told me all about it. There wasn't a man in Ireland could have pulled you through like myself."

"How do you mean?" cried Martin, hurriedly.

"Sure, when he was down in the West, what was easier? Faix, if I had only had the wind of a word that matters were so bad, I'd have had the papers out of him long ago. You shake your head as if you didn't believe me; but take my word for it, I'm right, sir. I'd put a quarrel on him."

"*He'd* not fight you!" said Martin, turning away in disappointment.

"Maybe he wouldn't; but mightn't he be robbed? Couldn't he be waylaid, and carried off to the Islands? There was no need to kill him. Intimidation would do it all! I'd lay my head upon a block this minute if I wouldn't send him back to London without the back of a letter in his company; and what's more, a pledge that he'd never tell what's happened to him!"

"These cockney gents are more 'wide awake' than you suspect, Master Maurice, and the chances are, that he never carried a single paper or parchment along with him."

"Worse for him, then," said Scanlan. "He'd have to pass the rest of his days in the Arran Islands. But I'm not so sure he's as 'cute as you think him," added Maurice, after a pause. "He left a little note-book once behind him that told some strange stories, by all accounts."

"What was that you speak of?" cried Martin, eagerly.

"I didn't see it myself, but Simmy Crow told me of it; and that it was full of all the fellows he ruined: how much he won from this man—what he carried off from that; and, moreover, there was your own name, and the date of the very evening that he finished you off! It was something in this wise: 'This night's work makes me an estated gentleman, *vice* Harry Martin, Esquire, retired upon less than half-pay!'"

A terrible oath, uttered in all the vehemence of a malediction, burst from Martin, and seizing Scanlan's wrist, he shook his arm in an agony of passion.

"I wish I had given you a hint about him, Master Scanlan," said he, savagely.

"It's too late to think of it now, captain," said the other, "the fellow is in Baden."

"Here?" asked Martin.

"Ay. He came up the Rhine along with me; but he never recognised me—on account of my moustaches perhaps—he took me for a Frenchman or a German, I think. We parted at Mayence, and I saw no more of him."

"I would that I was to see no more of him!" said Martin, gloomily, as he walked into another room, banging the door heavily behind him.

CHAPTER LI.

HOW PRIDE MEETS PRIDE.

Kate Henderson sat alone in her room reading a letter from her father. Her thoughtful brow a shade more serious perhaps than its wont, and at times a faint, half-sickly smile moving her dimpled cheek. The interests of our story have no concern with that letter, save passingly, nor do we regret it. Enough, if we say it was in reply to one of her own, requesting permission to return home, until, as she phrased it, she could "obtain another service." That the request had met scant favour was easy to see, as, folding up the letter, she laid it down beside her with a sigh and a muttered "I thought as much!"—"'So long as her ladyship is pleased to accept of your services,'" said she, repeating aloud an expression of the writer. "Well, I suppose he's right; such is the true reading of the compact, as it is of every compact where there is wealth on one side, dependence on the other! Nor should I complain," said she, still more resolutely, "if these same services could be rendered toilfully, but costing nothing of self-sacrifice in honourable feeling. I could be a drudge—a slave—to-morrow; I could stoop to any labour; but I cannot—no, I cannot—descend to companionship! They who hire us," cried she, rising, and pacing the room in slow and measured tread, "have a right to our capacity. We are here to do their bidding; but they can lay no claim to that over which we ourselves have no control—our sympathies, our affections—we cannot sell these; we cannot always give them, even as a gift." She paused, and, opening the letter, read it for some seconds, and then flinging it down with a haughty gesture, said, "'Nothing menial—nothing to complain of in my station!' Can he not see that there is no such servitude as that which drags out existence, by subjecting, not head and hands, but heart and soul, to the dictates of another? The menial—the menial has the best of it. Some stipulate that they are not to wear a livery; but what livery exacts such degradation as this?" And she shook the rich folds of her heavy silk dress as she spoke. The tears rose up and dimmed her eyes, but they were tears of offended pride, and as they stole slowly along her cheeks, her features acquired an expression of intense haughtiness. "They who train their children to this career are but sorry calculators!—educating them but to feel the bitter smart of their station, to see more clearly the wide gulf that separates them from what they live amongst!" said she, in a voice of deep emotion.

"Her ladyship, Miss Henderson," said a servant throwing wide the door, and closing it after the entrance of Lady Dorothea, who swept into the room in her haughtiest of moods, and seated herself with all that preparation that betokened a visit of importance.

"Take a seat, Miss Henderson," said she. And Kate obeyed in silence. "If in the course of what I shall have to say to you," resumed her ladyship—"if in what I shall feel it my *duty* to say to you I may be betrayed into any expression stronger than in a calmer moment would occur to me—stronger, in fact, than strict justice might warrant——"

"I beg your ladyship's pardon if I interrupt, but I would beg to remark——"

"What?" said Lady Dorothea, proudly.

"That simply your ladyship's present caution is the best security for future propriety. I ask no other."

"You presume too far, young lady. I cannot answer that my temper may not reveal sentiments that my judgment or my breeding might prefer to keep in abeyance."

"If the sentiments be there, my lady, I should certainly say, better to avow them," said Kate, with an air of most impassive coldness.

"I'm not aware that I have asked your advice on that head, Miss Henderson," said she, almost insolently. "At the same time, your habits of late in this family may have suggested the delusion."

"Will your ladyship pardon me if I confess I do not understand you?"

"You shall have little to complain of on that score, Miss Henderson; I shall not speak in riddles, depend upon it. Nor should that be an obstacle if your intelligence were only the equal of your ambition."

"Now indeed is your ladyship completely beyond me."

"Had you felt that I was as much 'above' you, Miss Henderson, it were more to the purpose."

"I sincerely hope that I have never forgotten all the deference I owe your ladyship," said Kate. Nor could humble words have taken a more humble accent, and yet they availed little to conciliate her to whom they were addressed; nay, this very humility seemed to irritate and provoke her to a greater show of temper, as with an insolent laugh she said:

"This mockery of respect never imposed on *me*, young lady. I have been bred and born in a rank where real deference is so invariable, that the fictitious article is soon detected, had there been any hardy enough to attempt it."

Kate made no other answer to this speech than a deep inclination of her head. It might mean assent, submission, anything.

"You may remember, Miss Henderson," said her ladyship, with all the formality of a charge in her manner—"you may remember that on the day I engaged your services you were obliging enough to furnish me with a brief summary of your acquirements." She paused, as if expecting some intimation of assent, and after an interval of a few seconds, Kate smiled, and said:

"It must have been a very meagre catalogue, my lady."

"Quite the reverse. It was a perfect marvel to me how you ever found time to store your mind with such varied information; and yet, notwithstanding that imposing array of accomplishments, I now find that your modesty—perhaps out of deference to my ignorance—withheld fully as many more."

Kate's look of bewilderment at this speech was the only reply she made.

"Oh, of course you do not understand me," said Lady Dorothea, sneeringly, "but I mean to be most explicit. Have you any recollection of the circumstance I allude to?"

"I remember perfectly the day, madam, I waited on you for the first time."

"That's exactly what I mean. Now, pray, has any portion of our discourse dwelt upon your mind?"

"Yes, my lady; a remark of your ladyship's made a considerable impression upon me at the moment, and has continued frequently to rise to my recollection since that."

"May I ask what it was?"

"It was with reference to the treatment I had been so long accustomed to in the family of the Duchesse de Luygnes, and which your ladyship characterized by an epithet I have never forgotten. At the time I thought it severe; I have learned to see it just. You called it an 'irreparable mischief.' Your ladyship said most truly."

"I was never more convinced of the fact than at this very moment," said Lady Dorothea, as a flush of anger covered her cheek. "The ill-judging condescension of your first protectors has left a very troublesome legacy for their successors. Your youth and inexperience—I do not desire to attribute it to anything more reprehensible — led you, probably, into an error regarding the privileges you thus enjoyed, and you fancied that you owed to your own claims what you were entirely indebted to from the favour of others."

"I have no doubt that the observation of your ladyship is quite correct," said Kate, calmly.

"I sincerely wish that the conviction had impressed itself upon your conduct then," said Lady Dorothea, whose temper was never so outraged as by the other's self-possession. "Had such been the case, I might have spared myself the unpleasantness of my present task." Her passion was now fully roused, and with redoubled energy she continued: "Your ambition has taken a high flight, young lady, and from the condescension by which I accorded you a certain degree of influence in this family, you have aspired to become its head. Do not affect any misconception of my meaning. My son has told me everything —everything—from your invaluable aid to him in his pecuniary difficulties, to your sage counsels on his betting-book; from the admirable advice you gave him as to his studies, to the disinterested offer of your own tuition. Be assured if *he* has not understood all the advantages so generously presented to him, *I* at least appreciate them fully. I must acknowledge you have played your game cleverly, and you have made the mock independence of your character the mask of your designs. With another than myself you might have succeeded, too," said her ladyship, with a smile of bitter irony; "but *I* have few self-delusions, Miss Henderson, nor is there amongst the number that of believing that any one serves me, in any capacity, from any devotion to my own person. I flatter myself, at least, that I have so much of humility."

"If I understand your ladyship aright, I am charged with some designs on Captain Martin?" said Kate, calmly.

"Yes; precisely so," said Lady Dorothea, haughtily.

"I can only protest that I am innocent of all such, my lady," said she, with an expression of great deference. "It is a charge that does not admit of any other refutation, since, if I appeal to my conduct, your ladyship's suspicions would not exculpate me."

"Certainly not."

"I thought so. What, then, can I adduce? I'm sure your ladyship's own delicacy will see that this is not a case where testimony can be invoked. I cannot—you would not ask me to —require an acquittal from the lips of Captain Martin himself; humble as I stand here, my lady, you never could mean to expose me to this humiliation." For the first time did her voice falter, and a sickly paleness came over her as she uttered the last words.

"The humiliation which you had intended for this family, Miss Henderson, is alone what demands consideration from *me*. If what you call your exculpation requires Captain Martin's presence, I confess I see no objection to it."

"It is only, then because your ladyship is angry with me that you could bring yourself to think so, especially since another and much easier solution of the difficulty offers itself."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"To send me home, madam."

"I understand you, young lady. I am to send you back to your father's house as one whose presence here was too dangerous—whose attractions could only be resisted by means of absence and distance. A very interesting martyrdom might have been made of it, I've no doubt, and even some speculation as to the conduct of a young gentleman so suddenly bereaved of the object of his affections. But all this is much too dignified for me. *My* son shall be taught to respect himself without the intervention of any contrivance."

As she uttered the last words she arose and approached the bell.

"Your ladyship surely is not going——"

"I am going to send for Captain Martin, Miss Henderson."

"Do not, I entreat of you—I implore your ladyship," cried Kate. with her clasped hands trembling as she spoke.

"This agitation is not without a cause, and would alone decide me to call for my son."

"If I have ever deserved well at your hands, my lady—if I have served you faithfully in anything—if my devotion has lightened you of one care, or aided you through one difficulty—spare me, oh spare me, I beseech you, this—degradation!"

"I have a higher consideration to consult here, Miss Henderson, than any which can have reference to you." She pulled the bell violently, and while her hand still held the cord the servant entered. "Tell Captain Martin to come here," said she, and sat down.

Kate leaned her arm upon the chimney-piece, and, resting her head on it, never uttered a word.

For several minutes the silence was unbroken on either side. At last Lady Dorothea started suddenly, and said:

"We cannot receive Captain Martin here."

"Your ladyship is full of consideration!" said Kate, bitterly "For a moment I had thought it was only an additional humiliation to which you had destined me."

"Follow me into the drawing-room, Miss Henderson," said Lady Dorothea, proudly, as she left the room. And with slow, submissive mien, Kate quitted the chamber and walked after her.

Scarcely had the door of the drawing-room been closed upon them than it was re-opened to admit Captain Martin. He was booted and spurred for his afternoon canter, and seemed in nowise pleased at the sudden interruption to his project.

"They said you wanted me," cried he; "and here have I been searching for you in your dressing-room, and all over the house."

"I desire to speak with you," said she, proudly, and she motioned to a chair.

"I trust the *séance* is to be a brief one, otherwise I'll beg a postponement," said he, half laughingly. Then turning his glance towards Kate, he remarked for the first time the deathlike colour of her face, and an expression of repressed suffering that all her self-control could not conceal. "Has anything happened? What is it?" said he, in a half-whisper.

But she never replied, nor even seemed to heed his question.

"Tell me, I beseech you," cried he, turning to Lady Dorothea—"tell me, has anything gone wrong?"

"It is precisely on that account I have sent for you, Captain Martin," said her ladyship, as she assigned to him a seat with a motion of her hand. "It is because a great deal has gone wrong here—and were it not for my vigilance, much more still likely to follow it—I have sent for you, sir, that you should hear from this young lady's lips a denial which, I own, has not satisfied *me*. Nor shall it, till it be made in your presence and meet with your corroboration. Your looks, Miss Henderson," said she, addressing her, "would imply that all the suffering of the present moment falls to *your* share; but I would beg you to bear in mind what a person in *my* sphere must endure at the bare possibility of the event which now demands investigation."

"Good heavens! will not you tell me what it is?" exclaimed Martin, in the last extremity of impatience.

"I have sent for you, sir," resumed she, "that you should hear Miss Henderson declare that no attentions on your part—no assiduities, I should perhaps call them—have ever been addressed to her; that, in fact"—here her ladyship became embarrassed in her explanation—"that, in fact, those counsels—those very admirable aids to your conduct which she on so many occasions has vouchsafed to afford you—have had no object—no ulterior object, I should perhaps call it—and that your—your intercourse has ever been such as beseems the heir of Cro' Martin, and the daughter of the steward on that property!"

"By Jove, I can make nothing of all this!" cried the captain, whose bewildered looks fully corroborated the assertion.

"Lady Dorothea, sir, requires you to assure her that I have never made love to you," said Kate Henderson, with a look of scorn that her ladyship did not dare to reply to. "*I*," added she, "have already given my pledge on this subject. I trust that your testimony will not gainsay me."

"Confound me if I can fathom it at all!" said he, more distracted than ever. "If you are alluding to the offer I made you——"

"The offer you made," cried Lady Dorothea. "When?—how—? in what wise?"

"No, no—I will speak out," said he, addressing Kate. "I am certain *you* never divulged it—but I cannot accept that all the honourable dealing should be on one side only. Yes, my lady, however you learned it, I cannot guess, but it is perfectly true—I asked Miss Henderson to be my wife, and she refused me."

A low, faint sigh broke from Lady Dorothea, and she fell back into her chair.

"She would have it—it's not my fault—you are witness it's not," muttered he to Kate. But she motioned him in silence to the door, and then opening the window, that the fresh air might enter, stood silently beside the chair.

A slight shivering shook her; and Lady Dorothea—her cheeks almost lividly pale—raised her eyes, and fixed them on Kate Henderson.

"You have had your triumph!" said she, in a low but firm voice.

"I do not feel it such, madam," said Kate, calmly. "Nor is it in a moment of humiliation like this that a thought of triumph can enter."

"Hear me—stoop down lower. You can leave this—to-morrow, if you wish it."

Kate bowed slowly in acquiescence.

"I have no need to ask you that what has occurred here should never be mentioned."

"You may trust me, madam."

"I feel that I may. There—I am better—quite well, now! You may leave me." Kate curtseyed deeply, and moved towards the door. "One word before you go. Will you answer me one question? I'll ask but one—but your answer must be full, or not at all."

"So it shall be, madam. What is it?"

"I want to know the reason—on what grounds—you declined the proposal of my son?"

"For the same good reason, madam, that should have prevented his ever making it."

"Disparity—inequality of station, you mean?"

"Something like it, madam. Our union would have been both a blunder and a paradox. Each would have married beneath him!" And once more curtseying, and with an air of haughty dignity, Kate withdrew, and left her ladyship to her own thoughts.

Strange and conflicting were the same thoughts; at one moment stimulating her to projects of passionate vengeance, at the next suggesting the warmest measures of reconciliation and affection. These indeed predominated, for in her heart pride seemed the emblem of all that was great, noble, or exalted, and when she saw that sentiment, not fostered by the accidents of fortune, not associated with birth, lineage, and high station, but actually rising superior to the absence of all these, she almost felt a species of worship for one so gloriously endowed.

"She might be a duchess!" was the only speech she uttered, and the words revealed a whole volume of her meditations. It was curious enough how completely all recollection of her son was merged and lost in the greater interest Kate's character supplied. But so is it frequently in life. The traits which most resemble our own are those we alone attach importance to, and what we fancy admiration of another is very often nothing more than the gratified contemplation of ourselves.

CHAPTER LII.

MAURICE SCANLAN ADVISES WITH "HIS COUNSEL."

JACK MASSINGBRED sat in expectation of Mr. Merl's arrival till nigh ten o'clock, and if not manifesting any great degree of impatience at the delay, still showing unmistakable signs of uneasiness, as though the event were not destitute of some cause for anxiety. At last a note arrived to say that a sudden and imperative necessity to start at once for England would prevent Mr. Merl from keeping his appointment. "I shall be in town by Tuesday," continued the writer, "and if Captain Martin has any communication to make to me respecting his affairs, let it be addressed to Messrs. Twining and Scape's, solicitors, Furnival's Inn. I hope that with regard to your own matter, you will make suitable provision for the acceptance due on the ninth of next month. Any further renewal would prove a great inconvenience to yours,

"Very sincerely and to command,
"HERMAN MERL."

"Negotiations have ended ere they were opened, and war is proclaimed at once," said Massingbred, as he read over this brief epistle. "You may come forth, Master Scanlan," added he, opening the door of his bedroom, and admitting that gentleman. "Our Hebrew is an overmatch for us. He declines to appear."

"Why so? How is that?" asked Scanlan.

"There's his note," said the other; "read, and digest it."

"This smacks of suspicion," said Scanlan. "He evidently suspects that we have concerted some scheme to entangle him, and he is resolved not to be caught."

"Precisely; he'll do nothing without advice. Well, well, he but knew how unprepared we are, how utterly deficient not only in resources, but actually in the commonest information of our subject, he might have ventured here in all safety."

"Has Captain Martin not put you in possession of the whole case, then?"

"Why, my good Scanlan, the captain knows nothing—actually nothing, of his difficulties. He has, it is true, a perfect conviction that he is out of his depth, but whether he be in five fathom water or fifty he doesn't know; and, what's stranger, he doesn't care!"

"After all, if it be over his head, I suppose it's pretty much the same thing," said Scanlan, with a bitter laugh.

"I beg to offer my dissent to that doctrine," said Massingbred, gently. "Where the water is only just out of a man's depth, the shore is usually not very distant. Now, if we were quite certain such were the case here, we might hope to save him. If, on the contrary, he has gone down out of all sight of land——" He stopped, gazed steadily at Scanlan for a few seconds, and then in a lower tone, not devoid of a touch of anxiety, said, "Eh, do you really know this to be so?"

"I'll tell you all I know, Mr. Massingbred," said he, as having turned the key in the door he took his seat at the table. "And I'll tell you, besides, how I came by the knowledge, and I'll leave it to your own judgment to say what his chance is worth. When Merl was stopping at Kilkieran, he left there a little pocket-book, with memorandums of all his secret transactions. Mighty nice doings they were—and profitable, too—as you'll perceive when you look over it."

"You have it, then?" cried Jack, eagerly.

"Here it is," said he, producing the precious volume, and laying his hand firmly on it. "Here it is now. I got it under a pledge to hand it to himself, which I needn't tell you I never had the slightest intention of performing. It's not every day in the week one has the good luck to get a peep into the enemy's brief, and this is exactly what you'll find here."

Massingbred stretched out his hand to take the book, but Scanlan quietly replaced it in his pocket, and, with a dry and very peculiar smile, said:

"Have a little patience, sir. We must go regularly to work here. You shall see this book—you shall examine it—and even retain it—but it must be on conditions."

"Oh, you may confide in me, Scanlan. Even if Mr. Merl were my friend—which I assure you he is not—I could not venture to betray *you*."

"That's not exactly what I'm thinking of, Mr. Massingbred I'm certain you'd say nothing to Merl of what you saw here. My mind is easy enough upon that score."

"Well, then, in what direction do your suspicions point?"

"They're not suspicions, sir," was the dry response.

"Fears—hesitations—whatever you like to call them."

"Are we on honour here, Mr. Massingbred?" said Scanlan, after a pause.

"For myself, I say decidedly so," was the firm reply.

"That will do, sir. I ask only one pledge, and I'm sure you'll not refuse it: if you should think, on reflection, that what I propose to you this evening is neither practicable nor advisable—that, in fact, you could neither concur in it nor aid it—that you'll never, so long as you live, divulge it to any one, man, woman, or child. Have I that promise?"

"I think I may safely say that."

"Ay, but do you say it?"

"I do; here is my promise."

"That will do. I don't ask a word more. Now, Mr. Massingbred," said he, replacing the book on the table, "I'll tell you in the fewest words I can how the case stands—and brevity is essential, for we have not an hour to lose. Merl is gone to London about this business, and we'll have to follow him. *He'd* be very glad to be rid of the affair to-morrow, and he'll not waste many days till he is so. Read that bit there, sir," said he, pointing to a few closely-written lines in the note-book.

"Good heavens!" cried Jack, "this is downright impossible. This is a vile falsehood, devised for some infernal scheme of roguery. Who'd believe such a trumpery piece of imposition? Ah, Scanlan, you're not the wily fellow I took you for. This same precious note-book was dropped as a decoy, as I once knew a certain noble lord to have left his betting-book behind him. An artful device, that can only succeed once, however. And you really believed all this?"

"I did, and I do believe it," said Scanlan, firmly.

"If you really say so, we must put the matter to the test. Captain Martin is here—we'll send for him, and ask him the question; but I must say I don't think your position will be a pleasant one after that reply is given."

"I must remind you of your promise already, it seems," said

Scanlan. "You are pledged to say nothing of this, if you cannot persuade yourself to act along with me in it."

"Very true," said Massingbred, slowly; "but I never pledged myself to credit an impossibility."

"I ask nothing of the kind. I only claim that you should adhere to what you have said already. If this statement be untrue, all my speculations about it fall to the ground at once. I am the dupe of a stale trick, and there's an end of it."

"Ay, so far, all well, Master Scanlan; but *I* have no fancy to be associated in the deception. Can't you see that?"

"I can, sir, and I do. But perhaps there may be a readier way of satisfying your doubts than calling for the captain's evidence. There is a little page in this same volume devoted to one Mr. Massingbred. *You* surely may have some knowledge about *his* affairs. Throw your eye over that, sir, and say what you think of it."

Massingbred took the book in his hand and perused the place pointed out to him.

"By Jove! this *is* very strange," said he, after a pause. "Here is my betting-book on the St. Hubert all transcribed in full—however the Jew boy got hold of it—and here's mention of a blessed hundred pound note, which, in less than five years, has grown to upwards of a thousand!"

"And all true? All fact?"

"Perfectly true—most lamentable fact! Master Scanlan. How precise the scoundrel is in recording this loan as "after supper at Dubos'.' Ay, and here again is my unlucky wager about Martingale for the 'Chester,' and the handicap with Armytage. Scanlan, I recant my rash impression. This is a real work of its great author! *Aut Merl—aut Diabolus.*"

"I could have sworn it," said Scanlan.

"To be sure you could, man, and have done, ere this time o' day, fifty other things on fainter evidence. But let me tell you it requires strong testimony to make one believe that there should live such a consummate fool in the world as would sell his whole reversionary right to a splendid estate of some twelve thousand——"

"Fifteen at the lowest," broke in Scanlan.

"Worse again. Fifteen thousand a year for twenty-two thousand seven hundred and sixty-four pounds sterling."

"And he has done it."

"No, no; the thing is utterly incredible, man. Any one must see that if he did want to make away with his inheritance, that he could have obtained ten, twenty times that sum amongst the tribe of Merl."

"No doubt, if he were free to negotiate the transaction. But you'll see, on looking over these pages, in what a network of debt he was involved—how, as early as four years ago, at the Cape, he owed Merl large sums, lost at play, and borrowed at heavy interest. So that, at length, this same twenty-two thousand, assumed as paid for the reversion, was in reality but the balance of an immense demand for money lost, bills renewed, sums lent, debts discharged, and so on. But to avoid the legal difficulty of an 'immoral obligation,' the sale of the reversion is limited to this simple payment of twenty-two thousand——"

"Seven hundred and sixty-four pounds, sir. Don't let us diminish the price by a fraction," said Massingbred. "Wonderful people ye are, to be sure; and whether in your talent for savings, or dislike for sausages, alike admirable and praiseworthy! What a strange circle do events observe, and how irrevocable is the law of the material, the stern rule of the moral world, decay, decomposition, and regeneration following on each other; and as great men's ashes beget grubs, so do illustrious houses generate in their rottenness the race of Herman Merls."

Scanlan tried to smile at the rhapsodical conceit, but for some private reason of his own he did not relish nor enjoy it.

"So, then, according to the record," said Massingbred, holding up the book, "there is an end of the 'Martins of Cro' Martin?'"

"That's it, sir, in one word."

"It is too shocking—too horrible to believe," said Massingbred, with more of sincerity than his manner usually displayed. "Eh, Scanlan—is it not so?" added he, as waiting in vain for some show of concurrence.

"I believe, however," said the other, "it's the history of every great family's downfal: small liabilities growing in secrecy to become heavy charges, severe pressure exerted by those out of whose pockets came eventually the loans to meet the difficulties—shrewdness and rapacity on one side, folly and wastefulness on the other."

"Ay, ay; but who ever heard of a whole estate disposed of for less than two years of its rental?"

"That's exactly the case, sir," said he, in the same calm tone as before; "and what makes matters worse. we have little time to look out for expedients. Magennis will put us on our title at the new trial next assizes. Merl will take fright at the insecurity of his claim, and dispose of it—heaven knows to whom—perhaps to that very league now formed to raise litigation against all the old tenures."

"Stop, stop, Scanlan! There is quite enough difficulty before us, without conjuring up new complications," cried Massingbred. "Have you anything to suggest? What ought to be done here?"

Scanlan was silent, and leaning his head on his hand, seemed lost in thought.

"Come, Scanlan, you've thought over all this ere now. Tell me, man, what do you advise?"

Scanlan was silent.

"Out with it, Scanlan. I know, I feel that you have a resource in store against all these perils! Out with it, man."

"Have I any need to remind you of your promise, Mr. Massingbred?" asked the other, stealthily.

"Not the slightest, Scanlan. I never forget a pledge."

"Very well, sir; that's enough," said Scanlan, speaking rapidly, and like one anxious to overcome his confusion by an effort. "We have just one thing to do. We must buy out Merl. Of course as reasonably as we can, but buy him out we must. What between his own short experiences of Ireland, and the exposure that any litigation is sure to bring with it, he's not likely to be hard to deal with, particularly when we are in possession, as I suppose we may be, through *your* intimacy with the captain, of all the secret history of these transactions. I take it for granted that he'll be as glad of a settlement that keeps all 'snug,' as ourselves. Less than the twenty-two thousand we can't expect he'll take."

"And how are we to raise that sum without Mr. Martin's concurrence?"

"I wish that was the only difficulty," said Scanlan.

"What do you mean?"

"Just this: that in his present state no act of his would stand. Sure his mind is gone. There isn't a servant about him couldn't swear to his fancies and imaginations. No, sir, the whole thing must be done amongst ourselves. I have eight thousand some hundred pounds of my own available at a moment; old Nelligan would readily—for an assignment of the Brewery and the Market-square—advance us ten thousand more;—the money, in short, could be had—more if we wanted it—the question is——"

"As to the dealing with Merl?" broke in Jack.

"No, sir, not that, though of course it is a most important consideration."

"Well, what then?"

"As to the dealing with Maurice Scanlan, sir," said he, making a great effort. "There's the whole question in one word."

"I don't see that there can be any grave obstacle against that. You know the property."

"Every acre of it."

"You know how you'd like your advance to be secured to you—on what part of the estate. The conditions, I am certain, might be fairly left in your own hands; I feel assured you'd not ask nor expect anything beyond what was equitable and just."

"Mr. Massingbred, we might talk this way a twelvemonth, and never be a bit nearer our object than when we began," said Scanlan, resolutely. "I want two things, and I won't take less than the two together. One is to be secured in the agency of the estate, under nobody's control whatever but the Martins themselves. No Mister Repton to say 'Do this, sign that, seal the other.' I'll have nobody over me but him that owns the property."

"Well, and the other condition?"

"The other—the other,"—said Scanlan, growing very red—"the other, I suppose, will be made the great difficulty—at least, on my lady's side. She'll be bristling up about her uncle the marquis, and her half-cousin the duke, and she'll be throwing in my teeth who I am, and what I was, and all the rest of it, forgetting all the while where they'll be if they reject my terms, and how much the most noble viceroy will do for her when she hasn't a roof over her head, and how many letters his grace will write when she hasn't a place to address them to—not to say that the way they're treating the girl at this very moment shows how much they think of her as one of themselves, living with old Catty Broon, and cantering over the country without as much as a boy after her. Sure if they weren't Pride itself, it's glad they might be that a—a—a respectable man, that is sure to be devoted to their own interests for ever, and one that knows the estate well, and, moreover than that, that doesn't want to be going over to London—no, nor even to Dublin—that doesn't care a brass farthing for the castle and the lodge in the park—that, in short, Mr. Massingbred, asks nothing for anybody, but is willing to trust to his industry and what he knows of life—— There it is, now—there's my whole case," said he, stammering, and growing more and more embarrassed. "I haven't a word to add to it, except this: that if they'd rather be ruined entirely, left without stick or stone, roof or rafter in the world, than take my offer, they've nothing to blame but themselves and their own infernal pride!" And with this peroration, to deliver which cost him an effort like a small apoplexy, Maurice Scanlan sat down at the table, and crossed his arms on his breast like one prepared to await his verdict with a stout heart.

At last, and with the start of one who suddenly bethought him of a precaution that ought not to be neglected, he said,

"Of course, this is so far all between ourselves, for if I was to go up straight to my lady, and say, 'I want to marry your niece,' I think I know what the answer would be."

Although Massingbred had followed this rambling and incoherent effort at explanation with considerable attention, it was only by the very concluding words that he was quite certain of having comprehended its meaning. If we acknowledge that he felt almost astounded by the pretension, it is but fair to add that nothing in his manner or air betokened this feeling. Nay, he even by a slight gesture of the head invited the other to continue, and when the very abrupt conclusion did ensue, he sat patiently as it were revolving the question in his own mind.

Had Scanlan been waiting for the few words which from a jury-box determine a man's fate for ever, he could not have suffered more acute anxiety than he felt while contemplating the other's calm and unmoved countenance. A bold, open rejection of his plan, a defiant repudiation of his presumption would not probably have pained him more, if as much as the impassive quietness of Jack's demeanour.

"If you think that this is a piece of impudence on my part, Mr. Massingbred—if it's your opinion that in aspiring to be connected with the Martins I'm forgetting my place and my station, just say so at once. Tell it to me frankly, and I'll know how to bear it," said he, at last, when all further endurance had become impossible.

"Nothing of the kind, my dear Scanlan," said Jack, smiling blandly. "Whatever snobbery once used to prevail on these subjects, we have come to live in a more generous age. The man of character, the man who unites an untarnished reputation to very considerable abilities, with talent to win any station, and virtues to adorn it, such a man wants no blazonry to illustrate his name, and it is mainly by such accessions that our English aristocracy, refreshed and invigorated as it is, preserves its great acknowledged superiority."

It would have required a more acute critic than Maurice Scanlan to have detected the spirit in which this rhapsody was uttered. The apparent earnestness of the manner did not exactly consort with a certain pomposity of enunciation and an over-exactness in the tone of the declamation. On the whole, Maurice did not like it. It smacked to his ears very like what he had often listened to in the Four Courts at the close of a "junior's" address; and there was a Nisi Prius jingle in it that sounded marvellously unlike conviction.

"If, then," resumed Massingbred, "they who by the accidents of fortune, or the meritorious services of their forefathers, represent rather in their elevation the gratitude of their country than——"

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, sir—indeed, I'm ashamed of myself for doing it—for your remarks are beautiful, downright eloquent; but the truth is, this is a case touches me too closely to make me care for a grand speech about it. I'd rather have just a few words—to the evidence, as one might say—or a simple answer to a plain question—Can this thing be done?"

"There's where you beat us, Scanlan. There's where we cannot approach you. You are practical. You reduce a matter at once to the simple dimension of efficacy first, then, possibility, and with these two conditions before you, you reject the fifty extraneous considerations, outlying contingencies, that distract and embarrass such fellows as *me*."

"I have no pretension to abilities like yours, Mr. Massingbred," said Scanlan, with unassumed modesty.

"Ah, Scanlan, yours are the true gifts, take my word for it!—the recognised currency by which a man obtains what he seeks for; and there never was an era in which such qualities bore a higher value. Our statesmen—our diplomatists—our essay writers—nay, our very poets, addressing themselves as they do to the correction of social wrongs and class inequalities—they are all 'practical!' That is the type of our time, and future historians will talk of this as the 'Age of Fact!'"

If one were to judge from Maurice Scanlan's face during the delivery of this peroration, it might be possibly inferred that he scarcely accepted the speech as an illustration in point, since anything less practical he had never listened to.

"When I think," resumed he, "what a different effect I should have produced in the 'House' had I possessed this requisite! You, possibly, may be under the impression that I achieved a great success?"

"Well, I did hear as much," said Scanlan, half doggedly.

"Perhaps it was so. A first speech, you are aware, is always listened to indulgently; not so a second, especially if a man rises soon after his first effort. They begin to suspect they have got a talkative fellow, eager and ready to speak on every question; they dread that, and even if he be clever they'll vote him a bore!"

"Faith! I don't wonder at it!" said Maurice, with a hearty sincerity in the tone.

"Yet, after all, Scanlan, let us be just! How, in heaven's name, are men to become debaters, except by this same training? You require men not alone to be strong upon the mass of questions that come up in debate, but you expect them to be prompt with their explanations, always prepared with their replies. Not ransacking history, or searching through 'Hansard,' you want a man who, at the spur of the moment, can rise to defend, to explain, to simplify, or mayhap to assail, to denounce, to annihilate. Isn't that true?"

"I don't want any such thing, sir!" said Scanlan, with a sulky determination that there was no misunderstanding.

"You don't. Well, what *do* you ask for?"

"I'll tell you, sir, and in very few words, too, what I do *not* ask for! I don't ask to be humbugged, listening to this, that, and the other, that I have nothing to say to; to hear how you failed, or why you succeeded; what you did, or what you couldn't do. I put a plain case to you, and I wanted as plain an answer. And as to your flattering me about being practical, or whatever you call it, it's a clean waste of time, neither less nor more!"

"The agency and the niece!" said Massingbred, with a calm solemnity that this speech had never disconcerted.

"Them's the conditions!" said Scanlan, reddening over face and forehead.

"You're a plucky fellow, Scanlan, and by Jove I like you for it!" said Massingbred. And for once there was a hearty sincerity in the way he spoke. If a man *is* to have a fall, let it be at least over a 'rasper,' not be thrown over a furrow in a ploughed field! You fly at high game, but I'm far from saying you'll not succeed." And with a jocular laugh he turned away and left him.

CHAPTER LIII.

A CONSULTATION.

Jack Massingbred was one of those who, in questions of difficulty, resort to the pen in preference to personal interference. It was a fancy of his that he wrote better than he talked. Very probably he thought so because the contrary was the fact. On the present occasion another motive had also its influence. It was Lady Dorothea that he addressed, and he had no especial desire to commit himself to a direct interview.

His object was to convey Mr. Scanlan's propositions—to place them fully and intelligibly before her ladyship without a syllable of comment on his own part, or one word which could be construed into advocacy or reprobation of them. In truth, had he been called upon for an opinion, it would have sorely puzzled him what to say. To rescue a large estate from ruin was, to be sure, a very considerable service, but to accept Maurice Scanlan as a near member of one's family seemed a very heavy price even for that. Still, if the young lady liked him, singular as the choice might appear, other objections need not be insurmountable. The Martins were very unlikely ever to make Ireland their residence again, they would see little or nothing of this same Scanlan connection, "and, after all," thought Jack, "if we can only keep the disagreeables of this life away from daily intercourse, only knowing them through the post-office and at rare intervals, the compact is not a bad one."

Massingbred would have liked much to consult Miss Henderson upon the question itself, and also upon his manner of treating it; but to touch upon the point of a marriage of inequality with her, would have been dangerous ground. It was scarcely possible he could introduce the topic without dropping a word, or letting fall a remark she could not seize hold of. It was the theme, of all others, in which her sensitiveness was extreme; nor could he exactly say whether she sneered at a *mésalliance*, or at the insolent tone of society regarding it.

Again he bethought him of the ungraciousness of the task he had assumed, if, as was most probable, Lady Dorothea should feel Mr. Scanlan's pretensions an actual outrage. "She'll never forgive me for stating them, that's certain," said he; "but will she do so if I decline to declare them, or, worse still, leave them to the vulgar interpretation Scanlan himself is sure to impart to them?" While he thus hesitated and debated with himself, now, altering a phrase here, now, changing a word there, Captain Martin entered the room, and threw himself into a chair with a more than ordinary amount of weariness and exhaustion.

"The governor's worse to-day, Massingbred," said he, with a sigh.

"No serious change, I hope?" said Jack.

"I suspect there is, though," replied the other. "They sent for me from Lescour's last night, where I was winning smartly. Just like *my* luck always, to be called away when I was 'in vein,' and when I got here, I found Schubärt, and a French fellow whom I don't know, had just bled him. It must have been touch and go, for when I saw him he was very ill—very ill indeed—and they call him better."

"It was a distinct attack, then—a seizure of some sort?" asked Massingbred.

"Yes, I think they said so," said he, lighting his cigar.

"But he has rallied, hasn't he?"

"Well, I don't fancy he has. He lifts his eyes at times, and seems to look about for some one, and moves his lips a little, but you could scarcely say that he was conscious, though my mother insists he is."

"What does Schubärt think?"

"Who minds these fellows," said he, impatiently. "They're only speculating on what will be said of themselves, and so they go on: 'If this does not occur, and the other does not happen, we shall see him better this evening.'"

"This is all very bad," said Massingbred, gloomily.

"It's a deuced deal worse than you know of, old fellow," said Martin, bitterly.

"Perhaps not worse than I suspect," said Massingbred.

"What do you mean by that?"

Massingbred did not reply, but sat deep in thought for some time. "Come, Martin," said he, at last, "let us be frank; in a few hours it may be, perhaps, too late for frankness. Is this true?" And he handed to him Merl's pocket-book, open at a particular page.

Martin took it, and as his eyes traced the lines a sickly paleness covered his features, and in a voice scarcely stronger than an infant's he said, "It is so."

"The whole reversionary right?"

"Every acre—every stick and stone of it—except," added he, with a sickly attempt at a smile, "a beggarly tract, near Kiltimmon, Mary has a charge upon."

"Read that, now," said Jack, handing him his recently-written letter. "I was about to send it without showing it to you, but it is as well you saw it."

While Martin was reading, Massingbred never took his eyes from him. He watched with all his own practised keenness the varying emotions the letter cost, but he saw that, as he finished, selfishness had triumphed, and that the prospect of safety had blunted every sentiment as to the price.

"Well," said Jack, "what say you to that?"

"I say it's a right good offer, and on no account to be refused. There is some hitch or other—I can't say what, but it exists, I know—which ties us up against selling. Old Repton and the governor, and I think my mother too, are in the secret, but I never was, so that Scanlan's proposal is exactly what meets the difficulty."

"But do you like his conditions?" asked Jack.

"I can't say I do. But what's that to the purpose? One must play the hand that is dealt to them—there's no choice! I know that, as agent over the property, he'll make a deuced good thing of it for himself. It will not be five nor ten per cent. will satisfy Master Maurice."

"Yes; but there is another condition also," said Jack, quietly.

"About Mary? Well, of course it's not the kind of thing one likes. The fellow is the lowest of the low; but even that's better, in some respects, than a species of half gentility, for he actually hasn't one in the world belonging to him. No one ever heard of his father or mother, and he's not the fellow to go in search of them."

"I confess that *is* a consideration," said Massingbred, with a tone that might mean equally raillery or the reverse; "so that you see no great objection on that score?"

"I won't say I'd choose the connection; but, 'with a bad book, it's at least a hedge'—eh, Massy, isn't it?"

"Perhaps so," said the other, drily.

"It doesn't strike me," said Martin, as he glanced his eye again over the letter, "that you have advocated Scanlan's plan. You have left it without, apparently, one word of comment. Does that mean that you don't approve of it?"

"I never promised him I would advocate it," said Jack.

"I have no doubt, Massingbred, you think me a deuced selfish fellow for treating the question in this fashion; but just reflect a little, and see how innocently, as I may say, I was led into all these embarrassments. I never suspected how deep I was getting. Merl used to laugh at me if I asked him how we stood—he always induced me to regard our dealings as trifles, to be arranged to-day, to-morrow, or ten years hence."

"I am not unversed in that sort of thing, unluckily," said Massingbred, interrupting him. "There is another consideration, however, in the present case, to which I do not think you have given sufficient weight."

"As to Mary, my dear fellow, the matter is simple enough. Our consent is a mere form. If she liked Scanlan, she'd marry him against all the Martins that ever were born; and if she didn't, she'd not swerve an inch if the whole family were to go to the stake for it. She's not one for half measures, I promise you; and then, remember, that though she is one 'of us,' and well born, she has never mingled with the society of her equals; she has always lived that kind of life you saw yourself—taking a cast with the hounds, one day, nursing some old hag with the rheumatism, the next. I've seen her hearing a class in the village school, and half an hour after, breaking in a young horse to harness. And what between her habits and her tastes, she is really not fit for what you and I would call the world." As Massingbred made no reply, Martin ascribed his silence to a part conviction, and went on: "Mind, I'm not going to say that she is not a deuced deal too good for Maurice Scanlan, who is as vulgar a hound as walks on two legs; but, as I said before, Massy, we haven't much choice."

"Will Lady Dorothea be likely to view the matter in this light, asked Jack, calmly.

"That is a mere matter of chance. She's equally likely to embrace the proposal with ardour, or tell a footman to kick Scanlan out of the house for his impertinence; and I own the latter is the more probable of the two—not, mark you, from any exaggerated regard for Mary, but out of consideration to the insult offered to herself."

"Will she not weigh well all the perils that menace the estate?"

"She'll take a short method with them—she'll not believe them."

"Egad! I must say the whole negotiation is in a very promising state!" exclaimed Jack, as he arose and walked the room. "There is only one amongst us has much head for a case of difficulty."

"You mean Kate Henderson?" broke in Martin.

"Yes."

"Well, we've lost *her* just when we most needed her."

"Lost her! How—what do you mean?"

"Why, that she is gone—gone home. She started this morning before daybreak. She had a tiff with my mother last night. I will say the girl was shamefully treated—shamefully! My lady completely forgot herself. She was in one of those blessed paroxysms in which, had she been born a Pasha, heads would have been rolling about like shot in a dockyard, and she consequently said all manner of atrocities; and instead of giving her time to make the 'amende,' Kate beat a retreat at once, and by this time she is some twenty miles on her journey."

Massingbred walked to the window to hide the emotion these tidings produced, for, with all his self-command, the suddenness of the intelligence had unmanned him, and a cold and sickly feeling came over him. There was far more of outraged and insulted pride than love in the emotions which then moved him. The bitter thought of the moment was, how indifferent she felt about *him*—how little *he* weighed in any resolve she determined to follow. She had gone without a word of farewell—perhaps without a thought of him. "Be it so," said he to himself; "there has been more than enough of humiliation to me in our intercourse. It is time to end it! The whole was a dream, from which the awaking was sure to be painful. Better meet it at once, and have done with it." There was that much of passion in this resolve that proved how far more it came from wounded pride than calm conviction; and so deeply was his mind engrossed with this feeling, that Martin had twice spoken to him ere he noticed his question.

"Do you mean then to show that letter to my mother?"

"Ay; I have written it with that object. Scanlan asked me to be his interpreter, and I have kept my pledge.—And did she go alone—unaccompanied?"

"I fancy so; but, in truth, I never asked. The doctors were here, and all that fuss and confusion going on, so that I had really little head for anything. After all, I suspect she's a girl might be able to take care of herself—shouldn't you say so?"

Massingbred was silent for a while, and then said: "You'll have to be on the alert about this business of yours, Martin, and if I can be of service to you, command me. I mean to start for London immediately."

"I'll see my mother at once, then'" said he, taking up Massingbred's letter.

"Shall I meet you in about an hour, in the Lichtenthal avenue?"

"Agreed," said he; and they parted.

We have no need, nor have we any right, to follow Massingbred as he strolled out to walk alone in an alley of the wood. Irresolution is an intense suffering to men of action; and such was the present condition of his mind. Week after week, month after month, had he lingered on in companionship with the Martins, till such had become the intimacy between them, that they scrupled not to discuss before him the most confidential circumstances, and ask his counsel on the most private concerns. He fancied that he was "of them;" he grew to think that he was, somehow, part and parcel of the family, little suspecting, the while, that Kate Henderson was the link that bound him to them, and that, without her presence, they resolved themselves into three individuals, for whom he felt wonderfully little of interest or affection. "She is gone, and what have I to stay for?" was the question he put to himself; and for answer he could only repeat it.

CHAPTER LIV.

A COMPROMISE.

THERE are many who think that our law of primogeniture is a sad hardener of the heart—estranging the father from the son, widening petty misunderstandings to the breadth of grievances, engendering suspicions where there should be trustfulness, and opening two roads in life to those who should rightfully have trod one path together. If one-half of this be the price we pay for our "great houses," the bargain is a bad one! But even taking a wide margin for exaggeration—allowing much for the prejudices of those who assail this institution—there is that which revolts against one's better nature, in the ever-present question of money, between the father and his heir. The very fact that separate rights suggest separate interests, is a source of discord; while the inevitable law of succession is a stern defiance to that sense of protection on one side, and dependence on the other, that should mark their relations to each other.

Captain Martin was not devoid of affection for his family. He had, it is true, been very little at home, but he did not dislike it, beyond the "boredom" of a rather monotonous kind of life. He was naturally of a plastic temperament, however, and he lived amongst a set whose good pleasure it is to criticise all who belong to them with the very frankest of candour. One told how his "governor," though rolling in wealth, kept him on a most beggarly allowance, illustrating, with many an amusing story, traits of avarice that set the table in a roar. Another exhibited his as such a reckless spendthrift, that the family estate would never cover the debts. There was a species of rivalry on seeing who should lay most open to public view details and incidents purely belonging to a family. It was even a principle of this new school to discuss, and suffer others to discuss before them, the class and condition of life of their parents in a tone of mockery and derision, whenever the occasion might admit it; and the son of the manufacturer or the trader listened to allusions to his birth and parentage, and even jested upon them himself, in a spirit more flattering to his philosophy than to his pride.

Martin had lived amidst all this for years. He had been often complimented upon the "jolly good thing he was to have one of these days;" he had been bantered out of many a wise and prudent economy, by being reminded of that "deuced fine property nobody could keep him out of." "What can it signify to *you*, old fellow, a few hundreds more or less. You must have fifteen thousand a year yet. The governor can't live for ever, I take it." Others, too, as self-invited guests, speculated on all the pleasures of a visit to Cro' Martin; and if at first the young man heard such projects with shame and repugnance, he learned at last to listen to them with indifference, perhaps with something less!

Was it some self-accusing on this score that now overwhelmed him as he sat alone in his room, trying to think, endeavouring to arouse himself to action, but so overcome that he sat there only half conscious, and but dimly discerning the course of events about him? At such moments external objects mingle their influences with our thoughts, and the sound of voices, the tread of footsteps, the mere shutting of a door, seem to blend themselves with our reveries, and give somewhat of reality to our dreamy fancies. A large clock upon the mantel-piece had thus fixed his attention, and he watched the minute hand as though its course was meting out the last moments of existence. "Ere it reach that hour," thought he, fixing his gaze upon the dial, "what a change may have come over all my fortunes!" Years—long years—seemed to pass over as he waited thus; scenes of childhood, of infancy itself, mingled with the gay dissipations of his after-life; school days and nights at mess, wild orgies of the play-table and sad wakings on the morrow, all moved through his distracted brain, till at length it was only by an effort that he could shake off these flitting fancies and remember where he was.

He at once bethought him that there was much to be done. He had given Massingbred's letter to his mother, entreating a prompt answer, but two hours had now elapsed and she had not sent her reply. There was a struggle between his better nature and his selfishness whether to seek her. The thought of that sick room, dark and silent, appalled him. "Is it at such a time

I dare ask her to address her mind to this? and yet hours are now stealing over which may decide my whole fate in life." While he thus hesitated, Lady Dorothea entered the room. Nights of anxiety and watching, the workings of a spirit that fought inch by inch with fortune, were deeply marked upon her features.. Weariness and fatigue had not brought depression on her, but rather imparted a feverish lustre to her eyes, ar an expression of haughty energy to her face.

"Am I to take this for true," said she, as, seating herself in front of him, she held out Massingbred's letter—"I mean, of course, what relates to yourself?"

He nodded sorrowfully, but did not speak.

"All literally the fact?" said she, speaking slowly, and dwelling on every word. "You have actually sold the reversion of the estate?"

"And am beggared!" said he, sternly.

Lady Dorothea tried to speak. She coughed, cleared her throat, made another effort, but without succeeding, and then, in a slightly broken voice, said, "Fetch me a glass of water. No, sit down; I don't want it." The blood again mounted to her pale cheeks, and she was herself again.

"These are hard terms of Scanlan's," said she, in a dry, stern tone. "He has waited, too, till we have little choice remaining. Your father is worse."

"Worse than when I saw him this morning?"

"Weaker, and less able to bear treatment. He is irritable, too, at that girl's absence. He asks for her constantly, and confuses her in his mind with Mary."

"And what does Schubärt think?"

"I'll tell you what he *says*," replied she, with a marked emphasis on the last word. "He says the case is hopeless; he has seen such linger for weeks, but even a day—a day——" She tried to go on, but her voice faltered, her lip trembled, and she was silent.

"I had begun to believe it so," muttered Martin, gloomily. "He scarcely recognised me yesterday."

"He is perfectly collected and sensible now," said Lady Dorothea, in her former calm tone. "He spoke of business matters clearly and well, and wished to see Scanlan."

"Which I trust you did not permit?" asked Martin, hurriedly.

"I told him he should see him this evening, but there is no necessity for it. Scanlan may have left this before evening."

"You suspect that Scanlan would say something—would mention to him something of this affair?"

"Discretion is not the quality of the low-born and the vulgar," said she, haughtily; "self-importance alone would render him unsafe. Besides"—and this she said rapidly—"there is nothing to detain the man here, when he knows that we accept his conditions."

"And are we to accept them?" said Martin, anxiously.

"Dare we refuse them? What is the alternative? I suppose what you have done with your Jew friend has been executed legally—formally?"

"Trust *him* for that; he has left no flaw there!" said Martin, bitterly.

"I was certain of it," said she, with a scarcely perceptible sneer. "Everything, therefore, has been effected according to law?"

"Yes, I believe so," replied he, doggedly.

"Then really there is nothing left to us but Scanlan. He objects to Repton; so do I. I always deemed him obtrusive and familiar. In the management of an Irish estate such qualities may be reckoned essential. I know what we should think of them in England, and I know where we should place their possessor."

"I believe the main question that presses now is, are we to have an estate at all?" said the captain, bitterly.

"Yes, sir, you have really brought it to that," rejoined she, with equal asperity.

"Do you consent to his having the agency?" asked Martin, with an immense effort to suppress passion.

"Yes."

"And you agree, also, to his proposal for Mary?"

"It is matter of complete indifference to me who Miss Martin marries, if she only continue to reside where she does at present. I'm certain she'd not consult *me* on the subject; I'm sure I'd never control *her*. It is a *mésalliance* to be sure, but it would be equally so, if she, with her rustic habits and uneducated mind, were to marry what would be called her equal. In the present case, she'll be a little better than her station; in the other, she'd be vastly beneath it!"

"Poor Molly!" said he, half aloud; and, for the first time, there was a touch of his father's tone and manner in the words.

Lady Dorothea looked at him, and with a slight shrug of the shoulders seemed to sneer at [illegible] low-priced compassion

"Scoff away!" said he, sternly; "but if I thought that any consent we gave to this scheme could take the shape of a coercion, I'd send the estate to the——"

"You have, sir—you have done all that already," broke in Lady Dorothea. "When the troubled breathing that we hear from yonder room ceases, there is no longer a Martin of Cro' Martin!"

"Then what are we losing time for?" cried he, eagerly. "Are moments so precious to be spent in attack and recrimination? There's Scanlan sitting on a bench before the door. Call him up—tell him you accept his terms—let him start for London, post haste. With every speed he can master he'll not be a minute too soon. Shall I call him?—shall I beckon to him?"

"Send a servant for him," said Lady Dorothea, calmly, while she folded up the letter, and laid it on the table at her side.

Martin rang the bell and gave the order, and then, assuming an air of composure he was very far from feeling, sat silently awaiting Scanlan's entrance. That gentleman did not long detain them. He had been sitting, watch in hand, for above an hour, looking occasionally up at the windows, and wondering why he had not been summoned. It was, then, with an almost abrupt haste that he at last presented himself.

"Read over that letter, sir," said Lady Dorothea, "and please to inform me if it rightly conveys your propositions."

Scanlan perused Massingbred's letter carefully, and, folding it up, returned it. "Yes, my lady," said he, "I think it embraces the chief points. Of course there is nothing specified es to the mode of carrying them out—I mean, as to the security I should naturally look for. I believe your ladyship does not comprehend me?"

"Not in the least, sir."

"Well, if I must speak plainer, I want to be sure that your concurrence is no mere barren concession, my lady; that, in admitting my pretensions, your ladyship favours them. This is, of course," said he, in a tone of deference, "if your ladyship condescends to accept the terms at all; for, as yet, you have not said so."

"If I had not been so minded, sir, this interview would not have taken place."

"Well, indeed, I thought as much myself," said he; "and so, I at once entered upon what one might call the working details of the measure."

"How long will it take you to reach London, sir?" asked she, coldly.

"Four days, my lady, travelling night and day."

"How soon after your arrival there can you make such arrangements as will put this affair out of all danger, using every endeavour in your power?"

"I hope I could answer for that within a week—maybe, less."

"You'll have to effect it in half that time, sir," said she, solemnly.

"Well, I don't despair of that same, if I have only your ladyship's promise to all that is set down there. I'll neither eat nor sleep till the matter is in good train."

"I repeat, sir, that if this settlement be not accomplished in less than a week from the present moment, it may prove utterly valueless."

"I can only say I'll do my best, my lady. I'd be on the road this minute, if your ladyship would dismiss me."

"Very well, sir—you are free. I pledge myself to the full conditions of this letter. Captain Martin binds himself equally to observe them."

"I'd like it in writing under your ladyship's hand," said Scanlan, in a half whisper, as though afraid to speak such doubts aloud. "It is not that I have the least suspicion or misgiving in life about your ladyship's word—I'd take it for a million of money—but when I come to make my proposals in person to Miss Mary——"

"There, sir, that will do!" said she, with a disdainful look, as if to repress an explanation so disagreeable. "You need not enter further upon the question. If you address me by letter, I will reply to it."

"There it is, my lady," said he, producing a sealed epistle, and placing it on the table before her. "I had it ready, just not to be losing time. My London address is inside; and if you'll write to me by to-morrow's post—or the day after," added he, remarking a movement of impatience in her face——

"You shall have your bond, sir—you shall have your bond," broke she in, haughtily.

"That ought to be enough, I think," said the captain, with a degree of irritation that bespoke a long internal conflict.

"I want nothing beyond what I shall earn, Captain Martin," said Scanlan, as a flash of angry meaning covered his features.

"And we have agreed to the terms, Mr. Scanlan," said her ladyship, with a great effort to conciliate. "It only remains for us to say, a good journey, and every success attend you."

"Thank you, my lady; I'm your most obedient. Captain, I wish you good-by, and hope soon to send you happy tidings. I trust, if Mr. Martin asks after me, that you'll give him my respectful duty; and if——"

"We'll forget nothing, sir," said Lady Dorothea, rising; and Scanlan, after a moment's hesitation as to whether he should venture to offer his hand—a measure for which, happily, he could not muster the courage—bowed himself out of the room, and closed the door.

"Not a very cordial leave-taking for one that's to be her nephew," muttered he, with a bitter laugh, as he descended the stairs. "And, indeed, my first cousin, the captain, isn't the model of family affection. Never mind, Maurice, your day is coming!" And with this assuring reflection he issued forth to give orders for his journey.

A weary sigh—the outpouring of an oppressed and jaded spirit—broke from Lady Dorothea as the door closed after him. "Insufferable creature!" muttered she to herself; and then, turning to the captain, said aloud, "Is that man capable of playing us false?—or, rather, has he the power of doing so?"

"It is just what I have been turning over in my own mind," replied he. "I don't quite trust him; and, in fact, I'd follow him over to London, if I were free at this moment."

"Perhaps you ought to do so; it might be the wisest course," said she, hesitatingly.

"Do you think I could leave this with safety?" asked he. But she did not seem to have heard the question. He repeated it, and she was still silent. "If the doctors could be relied on, they should be able to tell us."

"To tell us what?" asked she, abruptly, almost sternly.

"I mean't that they'd know—that they'd perhaps be in a position to judge—that they at least could warn us——" Here he stopped, confused and embarrassed, and quite unable to continue. That sense of embarrassment, however, came less of his own reflections than of the cold, steady, and searching look which his mother never ceased to bend on him. It was a gaze that seemed to imply, "Say on, and let me hear how destitute of all feeling you will avow yourself." It was, indeed, the meaning of her stare, and so he felt it, as the colour came and went in his cheek, and a sense of faintish sickness crept over him.

"The post has arrived, my lady, and I have left your ladyship's letters on the dressing-table," said a servant. And Lady Dorothea, who had been impatiently awaiting the mail, hastened at once to her room.

CHAPTER LV.

A LETTER THAT NEVER REACHES ITS ADDRESS.

It was not without a very painful emotion that Lady Dorothea turned over a mass of letters addressed to her husband. They came from various quarters, written in all the moods of many minds. Some were the mere gossip of clubs and dinner parties—some were kindly and affectionate inquiries, gentle reproachings on his silence, and banterings about his pretended low spirits. A somewhat favourite tone is that same raillery towards those whose lot in life seems elevated above the casualties of fortune, forgetting the while that the sunniest path has its shadows, and they whom we deem exempt from the sore trials of the world have their share of its sorrows. These read strangely now, as he to whom they were addressed lay breathing the heavy and laboured breath, and muttering the low broken murmurs that prelude the one still deeper sleep!

With a tremulous hand, and a gesture of fretful impatience, she threw them from her one after the other. The topics and the tone alike jarred upon her nerves. They seemed so unfeeling, too, and so heartless at such a moment. Oh, if we wanted to moralise over the uncertainty of life, what a theme might we have in the simple fact that, quicker than the lines we are writing fall from our pen, are oftentimes changing the whole fate and fortune of him for whom we destine them! We are telling of hope where despair has already entered—we are speaking joy to a house of mourning! But one letter alone remained unopened. It was in Repton's hand, and she broke the seal, wondering how he, who of all men hated writing, should have turned a correspondent.

"The "strictly confidential" of the cover was repeated within; but the hour had come when she could violate the caution, and she read on. The first few lines were a half-jesting allusion to Martin's croakings about his health; but even these had a forced, constrained air, and none of the jocular ease of the old man's manner. "And yet," continued he, "it is exactly about your health I am most anxious. I want you to be strong and stout, body and mind, ready for action, and resolute. I know the tone and style that an absentee loves and even requires to be addressed in. He wants to be told that, however he may be personally regretted, matters go on wonderfully well in his absence, that rent is paid, farms improved, good markets abound, and the county a pattern of quietness. I could tell you all this, Martin, and not a syllable of it be true. The rents are not paid, partly from a season of great pressure; but, more still, from an expectancy on the side of the people that something—they know not what—is coming. The Relief Bill only relieved those who wanted to job in politics and make market of their opinions; the masses it has scarcely touched. They are told they are emancipated, but I am at a loss to know in what way they realise to their minds the new privilege. Their leaders have seen this. Shrewd fellows as they are, they have guessed what disappointment must inevitably ensue when the long-promised boon can show nothing as its results but certain noisy mob-orators made Parliament men; and so they have slily hinted—as yet it is only a hint—'this is but the first step—an instalment, they call it—of a large debt, every fraction of which must yet be paid!'

"Now there is not in all Europe a more cunning or a deeper fellow than Paddy. He has an Italian's subtlety and a Celt's suspicion; but enlist his self-love, his vanity, and his acquisitiveness in any scheme, and all his shrewdness deserts him. The old hackney coach-horses never followed the hay on the end of the pole more hopefully then will he travel after some promised future of 'fine times,' with plenty to eat and drink, and nothing to do for it! They have booked themselves now for this journey, and the delusion must run its course. Meanwhile rents will not be paid, farms not improved, bad prices and poverty will abound, and the usual crop of discontent and its consequent crime. I'm not going to inflict you with my own opinions on this theme. You know well enough already that I never regarded these 'Agrarian disturbances,' as they are called, in the light of passing infractions of the peace, but, traced in them the continuous working of a long preconcerted plan—the scheme of very different heads from those who worked it—by which the law should ever be assailed, and the right of property everlastingly put in dispute. In plain words, the system was a standing protest against the sway of the Saxons in Ireland! 'The agitators' understood thoroughly how to profit by this, and they worked these alternate moods of outrage and peace pretty much as the priests of old guided their auguries. They brought the game to that perfection, that a murder could shake a ministry, or a blank calendar become the triumph of an Administration!

"Such is, at the moment I am writing, the actual condition of Ireland! Come home, then, at once—but come alone. Come back resolved to see and act for yourself. There is a lingering spark of the old feudalism yet left in the people. Try and kindle it up once more into the old healthful glow of love to the landlord. Some would say, it is too late for all this; but I will not think so. Magennis has given us an open defiance; we are to be put on our title. Now, you are well aware there is a complication here, and I shall want to consult you personally; besides, we must have a search through those registries that are locked up in the strong room. Mary tells me you carried away the key of it. I tell you frankly, I wish we could hit upon some means of stopping Magennis. The suit is a small war, that demands grand preparation—always a considerable evil! The fellow, I am told, is also concocting another attack—an action against your niece and others for the forcible abduction of his wife. It would read fabulously enough, such a charge, but as old Casey said, 'There never yet was anything you couldn't impute at law, if you only employed the word "conspiracy;"' and I believe it! The woman certainly has deserted him, and her whereabouts cannot be ascertained. The scandal of such a cause would of course be very great; but if you were here we might chance upon some mode of averting it —at all events, your niece shouldn't be deserted at such a moment. What a noble girl it is, Martin, and how gloriously she comprehends her station! Give me a dozen like her, and I'll bid defiance to all the machinations of all the agitators; and they know it!

"If your estate has resisted longer than those of your neighbours the demoralizing influences that are now at work here, you owe it to Mary. If crime has not left its track of blood along your avenue or on your door-sill, it is she who has saved you. If the midnight hour has not been scared by the flame of your burning house or haggard, thank *her* for it—ay, Martin, *her* courage, *her* devotion, *her* watchful charity, *her* unceasing benevolence, the glorious guarantee her daily life gives, that *she* at least is with the people in all their sufferings and their trials! You or I had abandoned with impatience the cause that she had succoured against every disappointment. Her woman's nature has endowed her with a higher and a nobler energy than ever a man possessed. She *will not* be defeated!

"Henderson may bewail, and Maurice Scanlan deride, the shortcomings of the people. But through evil and good report she is there to hear from their own lips, to see with her own eyes, the story of their sorrows. Is this nothing? Is there no lesson in the fact that she, nurtured in every luxury, braves the wildest day of winter in her mission of charity?—that the most squalid misery, the most pestilent disease never deterred her? I saw her a few days back coming home at daybreak; she had passed the night in a hovel, where neither you nor I would have taken shelter in a storm. The hectic flush of fatigue and anxiety was on her cheek; her eyes, deep sunk, showed weariness; and her very voice, as she spoke to me, was tremulous and weak; and of what, think you, was her mind full? Of the noble calm, the glorious, patient endurance of those she had just quitted. 'What lessons might we not learn,' said she, 'beneath the wet thatch of poverty. There are three struck down with fever in that cabin; she who remains to nurse them is a little girl of scarcely thirteen. There is all that can render sickness wretched around them. They are in pain and in want; cold winds and rain sweep across their beds, if we could call them such. If they cherish the love of life, it must be through some instinct above all reason; and there they lie, uncomplaining. The little remnant of their strength exhausts itself in a look of thankfulness—a faint effort to say their gratitude. Oh, if querulous hypochondriacism could but see them, what teaching might it learn! Sufferings that call forth from us not alone peevishness and impatience, but actually traits of rude and ungenerous meaning, develop in them an almost refined courtesy, and a trustfulness that supplies all that is most choice in words of gratitude.'

"And this is the girl whose life every day, every hour is imperilling—who encounters all the hazards of our treacherous climate, and all the more fatal dangers of a season of pestilence, without friends, without a home! Now, Martin, apart from all higher and better considerations on the subject, this was not your compact—such was not the text of your bargain with poor Barry! The pledge you gave him at your last parting was, that she should be your daughter. That you made her feel all the affection of one, none can tell more surely than myself. That your own heart responds to her love I am as fully convinced of. But this is not enough, my dear Martin. She has rights—actual rights—that no special pleading on the score of intentions or good wishes can satisfy. I should but unworthily discharge my office, as your oldest friend in the world, if I did not place this before you broadly and plainly. The country is dull and wearisome, devoid of society, and without resources, and you leave it; but you leave behind you, to endure all its monotony, all its weariness, one who possesses every charm and every attraction that are valued in the great world! There is fever and plague abroad, insurrection threatens, and midnight disturbances are rife, and she who is to confront these perils is a girl of twenty. The spirit of an invading party threatens to break down all the 'prestige' of old family name and property—a cunningly devised scheme menaces the existence of an influence that has endured for centuries; and to oppose its working, or fall victim to its onslaught, you leave a young lady, whose very impulses of generous meaning may be made snares to entrap her. In a word, you neglect duty, desert danger, shun the path of honourable exertion, and retreat before the menace of an encounter, to place, where you should stand yourself, the frail figure and gentle nature of one who was a child, as it were, but yesterday. Neither your health nor your happiness can be purchased at such a price—your conscience is too sound for that—nor can your ease! No, Martin, your thoughts will stray over here, and linger amongst these lonely glens that she is treading. Your fancy will follow her through the dark nights of winter, as alone she goes forth on her mission of mercy. You will think of her, stooping to teach the young—bending over the sick bed of age. And then, tracing her footsteps homeward, you will see her sit down by a solitary hearth—none of her own around her—not one to advise, to counsel, to encourage her! I will say no more on this theme; your own true heart has already anticipated all that *I* could *speak*—all that *you* should *do*.

"Now for one more question, and I shall have finished the most painful letter I ever wrote in my life. There are rumours —I cannot trace them, nor fully understand them, but they imply that Captain Martin has been raising very considerable sums by reversionary bonds and post-obits. Without being able to give even a guess as to the truth of this, I draw your attention to the bare possibility, as of a case full of very serious complications. Speak to your son at once on the subject, and learn the truth—the whole truth. My own fears upon the matter have been considerably strengthened by hearing of a person who has been for several weeks back making inquiries on the estate. He has resided usually at Kilkieran, and spends his time traversing the property in all directions, investigating questions of rent, wages, and tenure of land. They tell marvellous stories of his charity and so forth—blinds, doubtless, to cover his own immediate objects. Mary, however, I ought to say, takes a very different view of his character, and is so anxious to know him personally, that I have promised her to visit him, and bring him to visit her at the cottage. And, by the way, Martin, why should she be at the cottage—why not at Cro' Martin? What miserable economy has dictated a change that must reflect upon her influence, not to speak of what is justly due to her own station? I could swear that you never gave a willing consent to this arrangement. No, no, Martin, the plan was never yours.

"I'm not going to bore you with borough politics. To tell truth, I can't comprehend them. They want to get rid of Massingbred, but they don't see who is to succeed him. Young Nelligan ought to be the man, but he will not. He despises his party—or at least what would call itself his party—and is resolved never to concern himself with public affairs. Meanwhile he is carrying all before him at the Bar, and is as sure of the Bench as though he were on it.

"When he heard of Magennis's intention of bringing this action against Mary, he came up to town to ask me to engage him on our side, 'since,' said he, 'if they send me a brief I cannot refuse it, and if I accept it, I promise you it shall be my last cause, for I have resolved to abandon the Bar the day after.' This, of course, was in strictest secrecy, and so you must regard it. He is a cold, calm fellow, and yet on this occasion he seemed full of impulsive action.

"I had something to tell you about Henderson, but I actually forget what it was. I can only remember it was disagreeable, and as this epistle has its due share of bitters, my want of memory is perhaps a benefit, and so to release you at once, I'll write myself, as I have never ceased to be for forty years,

"Your attached friend,

"VAL. REPTON.

"I believe I was wrong about Henderson; at least the disagreeable went no further than that he is supposed to be the channel through which Lady Dorothea occasionally issues directions, not always in agreement with Mary's notions. And as your niece never liked the man, the measures are not more palatable when they come through his intervention."

Lady Dorothea was still pondering over this letter, in which there were so many things to consider, when a hurried message called her to the sick room. As she approached the room, she could hear Martin's voice calling imperiously and angrily to the servants, and ordering them to dress him. The difficulty of utterance seemed to increase his irritation, and gave to his words a harsh, discordant tone, very unlike his natural voice.

"So," cried he, as she entered, "you have come at last. I am nigh exhausted with telling them what I want. I must get up, Dora. They must help me to dress."

As he was thus speaking, the servants, at a gesture from her ladyship, quietly stole from the chamber, leaving her alone at his bedside.

"You are too weak for this exertion, Godfrey," said she, calmly. "Any effort like this is certain to injure you."

"You think so?" asked he, with the tone of deference that he generally used towards her. "Perhaps you are right, Dora; but how can it be helped?—there is so much to do, such a long way to travel. What a strange confusion is over me. Do you know, Dolly,"—here his voice fell to a mere whisper—"you'll scarcely credit it, but all the time I have been fancying myself at Cro' Martin, and here we are in—in—what do you call the place?"

"Baden."

"Yes—yes—but the country?"

"Germany."

"Ay, to be sure, Germany—hundreds of miles away from home!" Here he raised himself on one arm, and cast a look of searching eagerness through the room. "Is he gone?" whispered he, timidly.

"Of whom are you speaking?" said she.

"Hush, Dolly, hush!" whispered he still lower. "I promised I'd not tell any one, even you, of his being here. But I must speak of it—I must—or my brain will turn. He *was* here—he sat in that very chair—he held my hand within both his own.

Poor, poor fellow! how his eyes filled when he saw me. He little knew how changed he himself was!—his hair white as snow, and his eyes so dimmed!"

"This was a dream, Godfrey—only a dream."

"I thought you'd say so—I knew it," said he, sorrowfully; "but *I* know better. The dear old voice rang in my heart as I used to hear it when a child, as he said, 'Do you remember me? To be sure I remembered him, and told him to go and fetch Molly; and his brow darkened when I said this, and he drew back his hand, and said, 'You have deserted her—she is not here!'"

"All this is mere fancy, Godfrey; you have been dreaming of home."

"Ay," muttered he, gloomily, "it was but too true; we did desert her, and that was not our bargain, Dolly. It was all the poor fellow asked at our hands—his last, his only condition. What's that letter you have there?" cried he, impatiently, as Lady Dorothea, in the agitation of the moment, continued to crumple Repton's letter between her fingers."

"A letter I have been reading," said she, sternly.

"From whom—from whom?" asked he, still more eagerly.

"A letter from Mr. Repton. You shall read it when you are better. You are too weak for all this exertion, Godfrey; you must submit——"

"Submit!" broke he in, "the very word he said. You submit yourself to anything, if it only purchase your selfish ease. No, Dolly, no, I am wrong. It was *I* that said so. I owned to him how unworthily I had acted. Give me that letter, madam. Let me see it," said he, imperiously.

"When you are more tranquil, Godfrey—in a fitting state."

"I tell you, madam," cried he, fiercely, "this is no time for trifling or deception. Repton knows all our affairs. If he has written now, it is because matters are imminent. My head is clear now. I can think—I can speak. It is full time Harry should hear the truth. Let him come here."

"Take a little rest, Godfrey, be it only half an hour, and you shall have everything as you wish it."

"Half an hour! you speak of half an hour to one whose years are minutes now!" said he, in a broken voice. "This poor brain, Dora, is already wandering. The strange things I have seen so lately—that poor fellow come back after so many years—so changed, so sadly changed—but I knew him through all the mist and vapour of this feverish state—I saw him dearly, my own dear Barry!" The word, as it were the last barrier to his emotion, brought forth a gush of tears, and burying his face within the bedclothes, he sobbed himself to sleep. As he slept, however, he continued to mutter about home and long passed years—of boyish sports with his brother; childish joys and sorrows were all mingled there, with now and then some gloomier reveries of later days.

"He has been wandering in his mind!" whispered Lady Dorothea to her son, as he joined her in the darkened room. "He woke up, believing that he had seen his brother, and the effect was very painful."

"Has he asked for *me?*" inquired the other.

"No; he rambled on about Mary, and having deserted her, and all that; and just as ill-luck would have it, here is a letter from Repton, exactly filled with the very same theme. He insists on seeing it, but of course he will have forgotten it when he awakes."

"You have written to Scanlan?" asked he.

"Yes; my letter has been sent off."

"Minutes are precious now. If anything should occur here" —his eyes turned towards the sick bed as he spoke—"Merl will refuse to treat. His people—I know they are his—are hovering about the hotel all the morning. I heard the waiter whispering as I passed, and caught the words, 'No better—worse, if anything.' The tidings would be in London before the post."

"Lady Dorothea made no reply, and all was now silent, save the unequal but heavy breathings of the sick man, and the faint, low mutterings of his dream. "In the arras—between the window and the wall—there it is, Barry," cried he, in a clear, distinct voice. "Repton has a copy of it, too, with Catty's signature—old Catty Broon."

"What is he dreaming of?" asked the young man.

But, instead of replying to the question, Lady Dorothea bent down her head to catch the now muttered words of the sleeper.

"He says something of a key. What key does he mean?" asked he.

"Fetch me that writing-desk," said Lady Dorothea, as she took several keys from her pockets, and noiselessly unlocking the box, she began to search amidst his contents. As she continued, her gestures grew more and more hurried—she threw papers recklessly here and there, and at last emptied the entire upon the table before her. "See, search if there be a key here," cried she, in a broken voice; "I saw it here three days ago."

"There is none here now, said he, wondering at her eagerness.

"Look carefully—look well for it," said she, her voice trembling at every word.

"Is it of such consequence——"

"It is of such consequence," broke she in, "that he into whose hands it falls can leave you and me beggars on the world!" An effort at awaking by the sick man here made her hastily restore the papers to the desk, which she locked, and replaced upon the table.

"Was it the Henderson did this?" said she aloud, as if asking the question of herself. "Could she have known this secret?"

"Did what? What secret?" asked he, anxiously.

A low, long sigh announced that the sick man was awaking, and in a faint voice he said, "I feel better, Dora. I have had a sleep, and been dreaming of home and long ago. To-morrow, or next day, perhaps, I may be strong enough to leave this. I want to be back there again. Nay, don't refuse me," said he, timidly.

"When you are equal to the journey——"

"I have a still longer one before me, Dora, and even less preparation for it. Harry, I have something to say to you, if I were strong enough to say it—this evening, perhaps." Wearied by the efforts he had made, he lay back again with a heavy sigh, and was silent.

"Is he worse—is he weaker?" asked his son.

A mournful nod of the head was her reply.

"Young Martin arose and stole noiselessly from the room, he scarcely knew whither; he indeed cared not which way he turned. The future threw its darkest shadows before him. He had little to hope for, as little to love. His servant gave him a letter, which Massingbred had left on his departure, but he never opened it; and in a listless vacuity he wandered out into the wood.

It was evening as he turned homeward. His first glance was towards the window of his father's room. They were wont to be closely shuttered and fastened; now, one of them lay partly open, and a slight breeze stirred the curtain within. A faint, sickly fear of he know not what, crept over him.

He walked on quicker; but as he drew nigh the door his servant met him. "Well!" cried he, as though expecting a message.

"Yes, sir, it is all over—he went off about an hour since." The man added something, but Martin heard no more, but hurried to his room, and locked the door.

CHAPTER LVI.

A VERY BRIEF INTERVIEW.

When Jack Massingbred found himself once more "in town," and saw that the tide of the mighty world there rolled on the same full, boiling flood he had remembered it of yore, he began to wonder where and how he had latterly been spending his life. There were questions of politics—mighty interests of which every one was talking—of which he knew nothing; party changes and new social combinations had arisen of which he was utterly ignorant; but what he still more acutely deplored was, that he himself had, so to say, dropped out of the memory of his friends, who accosted him with that half-embarrassed air that says, "Have you been ill?—or in India?—or how is it that we haven't met you about?" It was only last session he had made a flash speech—an effort that his own party extolled to the skies, and even the Opposition could only criticise the hardihood and presumption of so very young a Member of the House—and now already people had ceased to bear him in mind.

The least egotistical of men—and Massingbred did not enter into this category—find it occasionally very hard to bear the cool "go-by" the world gives them whenever a chance interval has withdrawn them from public view. The stern truth of how little each atom of the social scheme affects the working of the whole machinery, is far from palatable in its personal application. Massingbred was probably sensitive enough on this score, but too consummate a tactician to let any one guess his feelings; and so he lounged down to the "House," and lolled at his Club, and took his airings in the Park with all the seeming routine of one who had never abdicated these enjoyments for a day.

He had promised, and really meant, to have looked after Martin's affairs on his reaching London, but it was almost a week after his return that he bethought him of his pledge, his attention being then called to the subject by finding on his table the visiting card of Mr. Maurice Scanlan. Perhaps he was not sorry to have something to do—perhaps he had some compunctions of conscience for his forgetfulness; at all events, he sent his servant at once to Scanlan's hotel, with a request that he would call upon him as early as might be. An answer was speedily returned that Mr. Scanlan was about to start for Ireland that same afternoon, but would wait upon him immediately. The message was scarcely delivered when Scanlan himself appeared.

Dressed in deep mourning, but with an easy complacency of manner that indicated very little of real grief, he threw himself into a chair, saying, "I pledge you my word of honour, it is only to yourself I'd have come this morning, Mr. Massingbred, for I'm actually killed with business. No man would believe the letters I've had to read and answer, the documents to examine, the deeds to compare, the papers to investigate——"

"Is the business settled, then—or in train of settlement?" broke in Jack.

"I suppose it *is* settled," replied Scanlan, with a slight laugh. "Of course you know Mr. Martin is dead?"

"Dead! Good heavens! When did this occur?"

"We got the news—that is, Merl did—the day before yesterday. A friend of his who had remained at Baden to watch events, started the moment he breathed his last, and reached town thirty hours before the mail; not, indeed, that the captain has yet written a line on the subject to any one."

"And what of the arrangement? Had you come to terms previously with Merl?"

"No; he kept negotiating and fencing with us from day to day, now asking for this, now insisting on that, till the evening of his friend's arrival, when, by special appointment, I had called to confer with him. Then, indeed, he showed no disposition for further delay, but frankly told me the news, and said, 'The Conferences are over, Scanlan. I'm the Lord of Cro' Martin.'"

"And is this actually the case—has he really established his claim in such a manner as will stand the test of law and the Courts?"

"He owns every acre of it; there's not a flaw in his title; he has managed to make all Martin's debts assume the shape of advances in hard cash. There is no trace of play transactions throughout the whole. I must be off Mr. Massingbred; there's the chaise now at the door."

"Wait one moment, I entreat of you. Can nothing be done? Is it too late to attempt any compromise?"

"To be sure it is. He has sent off instructions already to serve the notice for ejectment. I've got orders myself to warn the tenants not to pay the last half year, except into Court.

"Why, are *you* in Mr. Mcrl's service, then?" asked Jack, with one of his quiet laughs.

"I am, and I am not," said Scanlan, reddening. "You know the compact I made with Lady Dorothea at Baden. Well, of course there is no longer any question about that. Still, if Miss Mary agrees to accept me, I'll stand by the old family! There's no end of trouble and annoyance we couldn't give Merl before he got possession. I know the estate well, and where the worst fellows on it are to be found! It's one thing to have the parchments of a property, and it is another to be able to go live on it, and draw the rents. But I can't stay another minute. Good-by, sir. Any chance of seeing you in the West soon?"

"I'm not sure I'll not go over to-morrow," said Jack, musing.

"I suppose you are going to blarney the constituency," said Maurice, laughing heartily at his coarse conceit. Then suddenly seeing that Massingbred did not seem to relish the freedom, he hurriedly repeated his leave-takings, and departed.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DARK SIDE OF A CHARACTER.

"YE might ken the style of these epistles by this time, Dinah," said Mr. Henderson, as he walked leisurely up and down a long low-ceilinged room, and addressed himself to a piece of very faded gentility, who sat at a writing-table. "She wants to hear naething but what she likes, and, as near as may be, in her ain words too."

"I always feel as if I was copying out the same letter every time I write," whined out a weak, sickly voice.

"The safest thing ye could do," replied he, gravely. "She never tires o' reading that everybody on the estate is a fule or a scoundrel, and ye canna be far wrang when ye say the worst o' them all. Hae ye told her aboot the burnin' at Kyle-a-Noe?"

"Yes, I have said that you have little doubt it was malicious."

"And hae ye said that there's not a sixpence to be had out of the whole townland of Kiltimmon?"

"I have. I have told her that, except Miss Mary herself, nobody would venture into the barony."

"The greater fule yerself, then," said he, angrily. "Couldna ye see that she'll score this as a praise o' the young leddy's courage? Ye maun just strike it out, ma'am, and say that the place is in open rebellion——"

"I thought you bade me say that Miss Mary had gone dow there and spoken to the people——?"

"I bade ye say," broke he angrily in, "that Miss Mary declared no rent should be demanded o' them in their present distress; that she threw the warrants into the fire, and vowed that if we called a sale o' their chattels, she'd do the same at the Castle, and give the people the proceeds."

"You only said that she was in such a passion that sh declared she'd be right in doing so."

"I hae nae time for hair-splitting, ma'am. I suppose if she had a right she'd exercise it! Put down the words as I gie them to ye! Ye hae no forgotten the conspeeracy?"

"I gave it exactly as you told me, and I copied out the two paragraphs in the papers about it, beginning, 'Greal scandal,' and 'If our landed gentry expect——'"

"That's right; and ye hae added the private history of Joan? They'll make a fine thing o' that on the trial, showing the chosen associate o' a young leddy to hae been nothing better than—— Ech! what are ye blubberin' aboot—is it yer feelin's, agen? Ech! ma'am, ye are too sentimental for a plain man like me!"

This rude speech was called up by a smothering effort to conceal emotion, which would not be repressed, but burst forth in a violent fit of sobbing.

"I know you didn't mean it. I know you were not thinking——"

"If ye canna keep your ain counsel, ye must just pay the cost o' it," said he, savagely. "Finish the letter there, and let me send it to the post. I wanted ye to say a' about the Nelligans comin' up to visit Miss Mary, and she goin' ower the grounds wi' them, and sendin' them pine-apples and grapes, and how that the doctor's girls are a'ways wi' her, and that she takes old Catty out to drive along wi' herself in the pony phaeton, which is condescendin' in a way her leddyship will no approve o'. There was mony a thing beside I had in my head, but ye hae driven them a' clean awa' wi' your feelin's!" And he gave the last word with an almost savage severity.

"Bide a wee!" cried he, as she was folding up the letter. "Ye may add, that Mister Scanlan has taken to shootin' over the preserves we were keepin' for the captain, and if her leddyship does not wish to banish the woodcocks a'thegither, she'd better gie an order to stop him. Young Nelligan had a special permission from Miss Mary hersel', and if it was na that he canna hit a haystack at twenty yards, there'd no be a cock pheasant in the whole demesne! I think I'm looking at her as she reads this," said he, with a malicious grin. "Ech, sirs, won't her great black eyebrows meet on her forehead, and her mouth be drawn in till never a bit of a red lip be seen! Is na that a chaise I see comin' up the road?" cried he, suddenly. "Look yonder!"

"I thought I saw something pass," said she. trying to strain her eyes through the tears that now rose to them.

"It's a post-chaise wi' twa trunks on the top. I wonder who's comin' in it?" said Henderson, as he opened the sash-door, and stood awaiting the arrival. The chaise swept rapidly round the beech copse, and drew up before the door; the postilion dismounting, lowered the steps, and assisted a lady to alight. She threw back her veil as she stood on the ground, and Kate Henderson, somewhat jaded-looking and pale from her journey, was before her father. A slight flush—very slight rose to his face as he beheld her, and without uttering a word he turned and re-entered the house.

"Ye are aboot to see a visitor, ma'am," said he to his wife; and, taking his hat, passed out of the room. Meanwhile, Kate watched the postboy as he untied the luggage and deposited it at her side.

"Didn't I rowl you along well, my lady?—ten miles in little more than an hour," said he, pointing to his smoking cattle.

"More speed than we needed," said she, with a melancholy smile, while she placed some silver in his hand.

"What's this here, my lady? It's like one of the owld tenpenny bits," said he, turning over and over a coin as he spoke.

"It's French money," said she, "and unfortunately I have got none other left me."

"Sure they'll give you what you want inside," said he, pointing towards the house.

"No, no; take this. It is a crown piece, and they'll surely change it for you in the town." And so saying, she turned towards the door. When she made one step towards it, however, she stopped. A painful irresolution seemed to possess her, but, recovering it, she turned the handle and entered.

"We did not know you were coming—at least he never told me," said her stepmother, in a weak, broken voice, as she arose from her seat.

"There was no time to apprise you," said Kate, as she walked towards the fire and leaned her arm on the chimney-piece.

"You came away suddenly, then? Had anything unpleasant—was there any reason——?"

"I had been desirous of leaving for some time back. Lady Dorothea only gave her consent on Tuesday last—I think it was Tuesday—but my head is not very clear, for I am somewhat tired." There was an indescribable sadness in the way these simple words were uttered, and in the sigh which followed them.

"I'm afraid he'll not be pleased at it!" said the other, timidly.

Another sigh, but still weaker than the former, was Kate's only reply.

"And how did you leave Mr. Martin? They tell us here that his case is hopeless," said Mrs. Henderson.

"He is very ill indeed; the doctors give no hope of saving him. Is Miss Martin fully aware of his state?"

"Who can tell? We scarcely ever see her. You know that she never was very partial to your father, and latterly there has been a greater distance than ever between them. They differ about everything; and with that independent way he has——"

A wide stare from Kate's full dark eyes, and expression of astonishment, mingled with raillery, in her features, here arrested the speaker, who blushed deeply in her embarrassment.

"Go on," said Kate, gently. "Pray continue, and let me hear what it is that his independence accomplishes."

"Oh dear!" sighed the other. "I see well you are not changed, Kate. You have come back with your old haughty spirit, and sure you know well, dear, that he'll not bear it."

"I'll not impose any burden on his forbearance. A few days' shelter—a week or two at furthest—will not be, perhaps, too much to ask."

"So, then, you have a situation in view, Kate?" asked she, more eagerly.

"The world is a tolerably wide one, and I'm sure there is room for me somewhere, even without displacing another. But let us talk of anything else. How are the Nelligans? and Joe, what is he doing?"

"The old people are just as you left them; but Mr. Joseph is a great man now—dines with the Lord-Lieutenant, and goes into all the grand society of Dublin."

"Is he spoiled by his elevation?"

"Your father thinks him haughtier than he used to be; but many say that he is exactly what he always was. Mrs. Nelligan comes up frequently to the cottage now, and dines with Miss Martin. I'm sure I don't know how my lady would like to see her there."

"She is not very likely," said Kate, drily.

"Why not?"

"I mean, that nothing is less probable than Lady Dorothea's return here."

"I suppose not!" half sighed Mrs. Henderson, for hers was one of those sorrowful temperaments that extracts only the bitter from the cup of life. In reality, she had little reason to wish for Lady Dorothea's presence, but still she could make a "very good grievance" out of her absence, and find it a fitting theme for regret. "What reason do you mean to give for your coming home, Kate, if he should ask you?" inquired she, after a pause.

"That I felt dissatisfied with my place," replied Kate, coldly.

"And we were always saying what a piece of good luck it was for you to be there! Miss Mary told Mrs. Nelligan—it was only the other day—that her uncle couldn't live without you—that you nursed him, and read to him, and what not; and as to her ladyship, that she never took a drive in the carriage, or answered a note, without asking your advice first."

"What a profound impression Miss Martin must have received of my talents for intrigue!" said Kate, sneeringly.

"I believe not. I think she said something very kind and good-natured, just as if it was only people who had really very great gifts that could condescend to make themselves subservient without humiliation. I know she said 'without humiliation,' because your father laughed when he heard of it, and remarked, 'If it's Kate's humility they like, they are assuredly thankful for small mercies!'"

"I should like to go over and see Miss Martin. What distance is it from this to the cottage?"

"It's full three miles; but it's all through the demesne."

"I'm a good walker, and I'll go," said she, rising. "But first, might I ask for a little refreshment—a cup of tea? Oh, I forgot," added she, smiling, "tea is one of the forbiden luxuries here."

"No; but your father doesn't like to see it in the daytime. If you'd take it in your own room——"

"Of course, and be most thankful. Am I to have the little room with the green paper, where I used to be, long ago?"

"Well, indeed, I can scarcely tell. The bed was taken down last autumn, and as we never thought of your coming home——"

"Home!" sighed Kate, involuntarily

"But come into my room, and I'll fetch you a cup of tea directly."

"No, no; it is better not to risk offending him," said Kate, calmly. "I remember, now, that this was one of his antipathies. Give me anything else, for I have not eaten to-day."

While her stepmother went in search of something to offer her, Kate sat down beside the fire, deep in thought. She had removed her bonnet, and her long silky hair fell in rich masses over her neck and shoulders, giving a more fixed expression to her features, which were of death-like paleness. And so she sat, gazing intently on the fire, as though she were reading her very destiny in the red embers before her. Her preoccupation of mind was such that she never noticed the opening of the door, nor remarked that her father had entered. The noise of a chair being moved suddenly startled her. She looked up, and there he stood, his hat on his head and his arms closely folded on his breast, at the opposite side of the fire.

"Well, lassie," said he, after a long and steady stare at her, "ye hae left your place, or been turned oot o' it—whilk is the case?"

"I came away of my own accord," said she, calmly.

"And against my leddy's wish?"

"No, with her full consent."

"And how did ye do it? for in her last letter to mysel', she says, 'I desire ye, therefore, to bear in mind that any step she takes on this head'—meaning about going away—'shall have been adopted in direct opposition to my wishes.' What hae ye done since that?"

"I have succeeded in convincing her ladyship that I was right in leaving her!" said Kate.

"Was it the force of your poleetical convictions that impelled ye to this course?" said he, with a bitter grin, for they tell me ye are a rare champion o' the rights o' the people, and scruple not to denounce the upper classes, while ye eat their bread."

"I denounce no one; nor, so far as I know myself, is ingratitude amongst my faults."

"Maybe, if one were to tak' your ain narrative for it, ye hae nae faults worse than mere failin's! But this is na telling me why ye left my leddy."

Kate made no answer, but sat steadily watching the fire.

"Ye wad raytber, mayhap, that I asked hersel' aboot it! Well, be it so. And noo comes anither point. Do ye think that if your conduct has in any way given displeasure to your mistress, or offended those in whose service ye were—do ye think, I say, that ye hae the right to involve *me* in your shame and disgrace?"

"Do you mean," said she, calmly, "that I had no right to come here?"

"It's just exactly what I mean; that if ye canna mak' frien for yoursel', ye ought not to turn away those whilk befrie your family."

"But what was I to have done, then?" said she, gentl "There were circumstances that required—imperatively require me—to leave Lady Dorothea——"

"Let me hear them," said he, breaking in.

"It would lead me to speak of others than myself—of events which are purely family matters—were I to enter upon this theme. Besides," said she, rising, "I am not, so far as I know, on my trial. There is not anything laid to my charge. I have no apologies to render."

At this moment her stepmother appeared with a tray at the door, and seeing Henderson, endeavoured to retire unobserved, but his quick eye had already detected her, and he cried out, "Come here—ye canna do too much honour to a young leddy who has such a vara profound esteem for hersel'! Cake and wine! my faith! No but ye'll deem it vara vulgar fare, after the dainties ye hae been used to! And yet, lassie, these are nae the habits here!"

"She has eaten nothing to-day!" meekly observed her stepmother.

"My fayther wad hae askit her hoo much has she earned the day?" said Henderson, severely.

"You are quite right, sir," broke in Kate—"I have earned nothing. Not just yet," added she, as her stepmother pressed a glass of wine on her acceptance; "a little later, perhaps. I have no appetite now."

"Are ye sae stupid, ma'am, that ye canna see ye are dealin' wi' a fine leddy, wha is no obleeged to hae the same mind twa minutes thegither? Ye'll hae to train wee Janet to be a' ready for whate'er caprice is uppermost. But mind me, lassie"—here he turned a look of stern meaning towards her—"ye hae tried for mony a lang day to subdue *me* to your whims and fancies, as they tell me ye hae done wi' sae mony others, and ye are just as far fra it noo as the first time ye tried it. Ye canna cheat nor cajole *me! I* know ye!" And with these words, uttered in a tone of intense passion, he slowly walked out of the room.

"Had he been angry with you?—had anything occurred before I came in?" asked her stepmother.

"Very little," sighed Kate, wearily. "He was asking me why I came here, I believe. I could scarcely tell him—perhaps I don't very well know, myself."

"He can't get it out of his head," said the other, in a low, stealthy whisper, "that, if you should leave Lady Dorothea, he will be turned away out of the stewardship. He is always saying it—he repeats it even in his dreams. But for that, he'd not have met you so—so—unkindly."

Kate pressed her hand affectionately, and smiled a thankful acknowledgment of this speech. "And the cottage," said she, rallying suddenly, "is about three miles off?"

"Not more. But you could scarcely walk there and back again. Besides, it is already growing late, and you have no chance of seeing Miss Mary if you're not there by breakfast-time, since, when she comes home of an evening, she admits no one. She reads or studies, I believe, all the evening."

"I think she'd see *me*," said Kate; "I should have so much to tell her about her friends. I'm sure she'd see me—at least, I'll try."

"But you'll eat something—you'll at least drink a glass of wine before you set out?"

"I do not like to refuse you," said Kate, smiling good-naturedly, "but I couldn't swallow, now. I have a choking feeling here in my throat, like a heavy cold, that seems as though it would suffocate me. Good-by, for a while. I shall be quite well, once I'm in the open air. Good-by!" And, so saying, she wrapped her shawl around her, and motioning a farewell with her hand, set out on her errand.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE COTTAGE.

It was one of those fresh and breezy days where brilliant flashes of sunlight alternate with deep shadow, making of every landscape a succession of pictures, that Kate Henderson set out on her way to the cottage. Her path led through the demesne, but it was as wild as any forest scene in Germany, now, wending through dark woods, now, issuing forth over swelling lawns, from which the view extended many a mile away,—at one moment displaying the great rugged mountains of Connemara, and at another, the broad blue sea, heaving heavily, and thundering in sullen roar against the rocks.

The fast-flitting clouds, the breezy grass, the wind-shaken foliage and the white-crested waves, all were emblems of life; there was motion, and sound, and conflict! and yet to her heart, as she walked along, these influences imparted no sense of pleasure or relief. For a few seconds, perhaps, would she suddenly awake to the consciousness of the fair scene before her, and murmur to herself, perchance, the lines of some favourite poet; but in another moment her gloomy thoughtfulness was back again, and with bent-down head was she again moving onward. At times she walked rapidly forward, and then, relaxing her pace, she would stroll listlessly along, as though no object engaged her. And so was it in reality—her main desire being to be free, in the open air; to be from beneath that roof whose shadow seemed to darken her very heart! Could that haughty spirit have humbled itself in sorrow she might have found relief; but her proud nature had no such resource, and in her full heart injury and wrong had alone their place.

"And this," burst she forth at length—"and this is Home!

this the dreamland of those far away over the seas—the cherished spot of all affections—the quiet nook wherein we breathe an atmosphere of love, blending our lives with all dearest to us. Is it, then, that all is hollow, false, and untrue; or is it that I alone have no part in the happiness that is diffused around me? I know not which would be the sadder!"

Thus, reasoning sadly, she went along, when suddenly, on the slope of a gentle hill in front of her, gracefully encircled with a young wood of larch and copper-beech, she caught sight of the cottage. It was a tasteful imitation of those seen in the Oberland, and with its wild background of lofty mountain, an appropriate ornament to the landscape.

A small stream running over a rocky, broken bed, formed the boundary of the little grounds, and over this a bridge of a single plank conducted the way to the cottage. The whole was simple and unpretending; there was none of that smart trimness which gives to such scenes the air of an imitation. The lawn, it is true, was neatly shaven, and the flower-plots, which broke its uniformity, clean from weeds; but the flowers were of the simplest kind—the crocus and the daffodil had to stand no dangerous rivalry, and the hyacinth had nothing to vie with.

Kate loitered for some time here, now gazing at the wild, stern landscape, now listening to the brawling rivulet, whose sounds were the only ones in the stillness. As she drew nigh the cottage, she found the windows of a little drawing-room open. She looked in: all was comfortable and neat-looking, but of the strictest simplicity. She next turned to the little porch, and pulled the bell: in a few seconds the sounds of feet were heard approaching, and a very old woman, whose appearance and dress were the perfection of neatness, appeared.

"Don't you know me, Mrs. Broon?" said Kate, gently.

"I do not, then, my lady," said she, respectfully, "for my eyes is gettin' dimmer every day."

"I'm Kate Henderson, Mrs. Broon. Do you forget me?"

"Indeed I do not," said Catty, gravely. "You were her with the master and my lady?"

"Yes. I went away with them to Germany; but I have come home for a while, and wish to pay my respects to Miss Mary."

"She isn't at home to-day," was the dry response.

"But she will return soon, I conclude. She'll be back some time in the evening, won't she?"

"If she plazes it, she will. There's nobody to control or make her do but what she likes herself," said Catty.

"I ask," said Kate, "because I'm a little tired. I've come off a long journey, and if you'd allow me to rest myself, and wait a while in the hope of seeing Miss Martin, I'd be very thankful.

"Come in, then," said Catty; but the faint sigh with which the words were uttered, gave but a scant significance of welcome.

Kate followed her into the little drawing-room, and, at a sign from the old woman, took a seat.

"Miss Mary is quite well, I'm glad to hear," said Kate, endeavouring to introduce some conversation.

"Will they ever come back?" asked the old women, in a stern, harsh voice, while she paid no attention whatever to Kate's remark.

"It is very unlikely," said Kate. "Your poor master had not long to live when I came away. He was sinking rapidly."

"So I heard," muttered the other, drily; "the last letter from Mr. Repton said 'he wasn't expected.'"

"I fear it will be a great shock to Miss Mary," said Kate.

The old woman nodded her head slowly several times without speaking.

"And perhaps cause great changes here?" continued Kate.

"There's changes enough, and too many already," muttered Catty. "I remember the place upwards of eighty years. I was born in the little house to the right of the road as you come up from Kelly's mills. There was no mill there then, nor a school-house, no, nor a dispensary either! Musha, but the people was better off, and happier, when they had none of them."

Kate smiled at the energy with which these words were uttered, surmising, rightfully, that Catty's condemnation of progress had a direct application to herself.

"Now, it's all readin' and writin', teachin' honest people to be rogues, and givin' them new contrivances to cheat their masters. When I knew Cro' Martin first," added she, almost fiercely, "there wasn't a Scotch steward on the estate; but there was noby turned out of his houldin', and there wasn't a cabin unroofed to make the people seek shelter under a ditch."

"The world would then seem growing worse every day," remarked Kate, quietly.

"To be sure it is. Why wouldn't it? Money is in every one's heart. Nobody cares for his own flesh and blood. 'Tis all money! What will I get if I take that farm over another man's head, or marry that girl that likes somebody better than me? 'Tis to be rich they're all strivin', and the devil never made people his own children so completely as by teachin' them to love goold!"

"Your young mistress has but little of this spirit in her heart?" said Kate.

"Signs on it! look at the life she leads: up before daybreak, and away many times before I'm awake. She makes a cup of coffee herself, and saddles the poney, too, if Patsey isn't there to do it; and she's off to Glentocher, or Knockmullen, twelve, fourteen miles down the coast, with barley for one, and a bottle of wine for the other. Sometimes she has a basket with her, just a load to carry, with tay and shugar, ay, and—for she forgets nothing—toys for the children, too, and clothes, and even books. And then to see herself, she's not as well dressed as her own maid used to be. There's not a night she doesn't sit up patchin' and piecin' her clothes. 'Tis Billy at the cross-roads made her shoes last time for her, just because he was starvin' with nothin' to do. She ordered them, and she wears them to; it makes him so proud, she says, to see them. And this is the niece of the Martins of Cro' Martin! without one of her kith or kin to welcome her home at nightfall—without father or mother, brother or sister—without a kind voice to say 'God bless her,' as she falls off to sleep many a time in that big chair there; and I take off her shoes without her knowin' it, she does be so weary and tired; and in her dhrames it's always talking to the people, givin' them courage, and cheerin' them up, tellin' them there's good times for every one; and once, the other evenin', she sang a bit of a song, thinkin' she was in Mat Leahy's cabin amusin' the children, and she woke up laughin', and said, Catty, I've had such a pleasant dhrame. I thought I had little Nora, my godchild, on my knee, and was teachin' her

"Why are the daisies in the grass?"

I can't tell you how happy I felt!' There it was: the only thing like company to her poor heart was a dhrame!"

"I do not wonder that you love her, Catty," said Kate; and the word fell tremulously from her lips.

"Love her! what's the use of such as me lovin' her?" cried the old woman, querulously. "Sure, it's not one of my kind knows how good she is! If you only seen her comin' in here, after dark, maybe, wet and weary and footsore, half famished with cold and hunger,—out the whole livelong day, over the mountains, where there was fever and shakin' ague, and starvin' people, ravin' mad between disease and destitution; and the first word out of her mouth will be, Oh, Catty, how grateful you and I ought to be with our warm roof over us, and our snug fire to sit at, never thinkin' of who she is and what she has the right to, but just makin' herself the same as *me*. And then she'd tell me where she was, and what she seen, and how well the people was bearin' up under their trials,—all the things they said to her, for they'd tell her things they wouldn't tell the priest. 'Catty,' said she, t'other night, 'it looks like heartlessness in me, to be in such high spirits in the midst of all this misery here; but I feel as if my courage was a well that others were drinking out of; and when I go into a cabin, the sick man, as he turns his head round, looks happier, and I feel as if it was my spirit that was warmin' and cheerin' him; and when a poor sick sufferin' child looks up at me and smiles, I'm ready to drop on my knees and thank God in gratitude.'"

Kate covered her face with her hands, and never spoke; and now the old woman, warming with the theme she loved best, went on to tell various incidents and events of Mary's life—the perilous accidents which befel her, the dangers she braved, the fatigues she encountered. Even recounted by *her*, there was a strange adventurous character that ran through these recitals, showing that Mary Martin, in all she thought, and said, and acted, was buoyed and sustained by a sort of native chivalry that made her actually court the incidents where she incurred the greatest hazard. It was plain to see what charm such traits possessed for her who recorded them, and how in her old Celtic blood ran the strong current of delight in all that pertained to the adventurous and the wild.

"'Tis her own father's nature is strong in her," said Catty, with enthusiasm. "Show him the horse that nobody could back, tell him of a storm where no fisherman would launch his boat, point out a cliff that no man could climb, and let me see who'd hould him! She's so like him, that when there's anything daring to be done you wouldn't know her voice from his own. There now, I hear her without," cried the old woman, as, rising suddenly, she approached the window. "Don't you hear something?"

"Nothing but the wind through the trees," said Kate.

"Ay, but *I* did, and my ears are older than yours. She's riding through the river now—I hear the water splashin'."

Kate tried to catch the sounds, but could not; she walked out upon the lawn to listen, but except the brawling of the stream among the rocks, there was nothing to be heard.

"D'ye see her comin'?" asked Catty, eagerly.

"No. Your ears must have deceived you. There is no one coming."

"I heard her voice, as I hear yours now. I heard her spake to the mare, as she always does when she's plungin' into the river. There, now, don't you hear that?"

"I hear nothing, I assure you, my dear Mrs. Broon. It is your own anxiety that is misleading you; but if you like, I'll go down towards the river and see." And without waiting for a reply Kate hastened down the slope. As she went, she could not help reflecting over the superstition which attaches so much importance to these delusions, giving them the character of actual warnings. It was doubtless from the mind dwelling so forcibly on Miss Martin's perilous life that the old woman's apprehensions had assumed this palpable form, and thus invented the very images which should react upon her with terror."

"Just as I thought," cried Kate, as she stood on the bank of the stream; "all silent and deserted, no one within sight." And slowly she retraced her steps towards the cottage. The old woman stood at the door pale and trembling; an attempt to smile was on her features, but her heart denied the courage of the effort.

"Where is she now?" cried Catty, wildly. "She rang the bell this minute, and I heerd the mare trottin' round to the stable by herself, as she always does. But where's Miss Mary?"

"My dear Mrs. Broon," said Kate, in her kindest accents, "it is just as I told you. Your mind is anxious and uneasy about Miss Martin; you are unhappy at her absence, and you think at every stir you hear her coming; but I have been to the riverside, and there is no one there. I'll go round to the stables, if you wish it."

"There's no tracks of a hoof on the gravel," muttered the old woman, in a broken voice; "there was nobody here!"

"So I said," replied Kate. "It was a mere delusion—a

"A delusion—a fancy!" cried Catty, scornfully; "that's the way they always spake of whatever they don't understand. It's easier to say that, than confess you don't see how to explain a thing; but I heerd the same sounds before you came to-day; ay, and I went down to see why she wasn't comin', and at the pool there was bubbles and froth on the water, just as if a baste had passed through, but no livin' thing to be seen. Wasn't that a delusion too?"

"An accident, perchance. Only think, what lives of misery we should lead were we ever tracing our own fears, and connecting them with all the changes that go on around us!"

"It's two days she's away, now," muttered the old woman, who only heeded her own thoughts; "she was to be back last night, or early this mornin'."

"Where had she gone to?" asked Kate, who now saw that the other had lapsed into confidence.

"She's gone to the islands!—to Innishmore, and maybe, on to Brannock!"

"That's a long way out to sea," said Kate, thoughtfully; "but still, the weather is fine, and the day favourable. Had she any other object than pleasure in this excursion?"

"Pleasure is it?" croaked Catty. "'Tis much pleasure she does be given herself! Her pleasure is to be where there's fever and want—in the lonely cabin, where the sick is lyin'! It's to find a poor crayture that run away from home she's gone now—one Joan Landy. She's missin' this two months, and nobody knows where she's gone to! and Miss Mary got so uneasy at last that she couldn't sleep by night, nor rest by day—always talkin' about her, and sayin' as much as it was all her fault—as if *she* could know why she went, or where?"

"Did she go alone on this errand, then?"

"To be sure she did. Who could she have with her? She towld Loony she'd want the boat with four men in it, and maybe to stay out three days, for she'd go to all the islands before she came back."

"Loony's the best sailor on the coast, I've heard, and with such weather as this there is no cause for alarm."

Catty did not seem to heed the remark: she felt that within her against which the words of consolation availed but little, and she sat brooding sorrowfully and in silence.

"The night will soon be fallin' now," said she, at last. "I hope she's not at sea!"

In spite of herself, Kate Henderson caught the contagion of the old woman's terrors, and felt a dreamy, undefined dread of coming evil. As she looked out, however, at the calm and fair landscape, which, as day declined, grew each moment more still, she rallied from the gloomy thoughts, and said,

"I wish I knew how to be of any service to you, Mrs. Broon. If you could think of anything I could do—anywhere I could go——" She stopped suddenly at a gesture from the old woman, who, lifting her hand to impress silence, stood a perfect picture of eager anxiety to hear. Bending down her head, old Catty stood for several seconds motionless.

"Don't ye hear it now?" broke she in. "Listen! I thought I heerd something like a wailin' sound far off, but it is the wind. See how the tree-tops are bendin'!—That's three times I heerd it, now," said Catty. "If ye live to be as old as me, you'll not think light of a warnin'. You think your hearin' better because you're younger; but I tell you that there's sounds that only reach ears that are goin' to where the voices came from. When eyes grow dim to sights of this world, they are strainin' to catch a glimpse of them that's beyond it." Although no tears rose to her eyes, the withered face trembled in her agony, and her clasped hands shook in the suffering of her sorrow.

Against impressions of this sort, Kate knew well enough how little reasoning availed, and she forbore to press arguments which she was aware would be unsuccessful. She tried, however, to turn the current of the old woman's thoughts, by leading her to speak of the condition of the country and the state of the people. Catty gave short, abrupt, and unwilling answers to all she asked, and Kate at length arose to take her leave.

"You're goin' away, are ye?" said Catty, half angrily.

"I have only just remembered that I have a long way to walk, and it is already growing late."

"Ay, and ye're impatient to be back again, at home, beside your own fire, with your own people. But *she* has no home, and her own has deserted her!"

"Mine has not many charms for me!" muttered Kate to herself.

"It's happy for you that has father and mother," went on the old woman. "Them's the only ones, after all!—the only ones that never loves the less, the less we desarve it! I don't wonder ye came back again!" And in a sort of envious bitterness Catty wished her a good night.

If the distance she had to walk was not shortened by the tenor of her thoughts, as little did she feel impatient to press onward. Dreary and sad enough were her reveries. Of the wild visionary ambitions which once had stirred her heart, there remained nothing but disappointments. She had but passed the threshold of life to find all dreary and desolate; but perhaps the most painful feeling of the moment was the fact that now pressed conviction on her, and told that in the humble career of such a one as Mary Martin there lay a nobler heroism and a higher devotion than in the most soaring path of political ambition, and that all the theorising as to popular rights made but a sorry figure beside the actual benefits conferred by one true-hearted lover of her kind. "She is right, and I am wrong!" muttered she to herself. "In declining to entertain questions of statecraft she showed herself above, and not beneath, the proud position she had taken. The very lowliness of this task is its glory. Oh, if I could but win her confidence and be associated in such a labour! and yet my very birth denies me the prestige that hers confers." And then she thought of home, and all the coldness of that cheerless greeting smote upon her heart.

The moon was up ere Kate arrived at her father's door. She tapped at it gently, almost timidly. Her stepmother, as if expecting her, came quickly, and in a low, cautious whisper told her that she would find her supper ready in her bedroom.

"To-morrow, perhaps, he may be in better humour, or better spirits. Good night." And so Kate silently stole along to her room, her proud heart swelling painfully, and her tearless eye burning with all the heat of a burning brain.

CHAPTER LIX.

"A TEA-PARTY" AT MRS. CRONAN'S

ONCE more, but for the last time, we are at Kilkieran. To a dreary day of incessant rain succeeded an evening still drearier. Wild gusts swept along the little shore, and shook the frail windows and ill-fitting doors of the cottages, while foam and sea-drift were wafted over the roofs, settling like snow-flakes on the tall cliffs above them. And yet it was midsummer! By the almanack the time was vouched to be the opening of the season; a fact amply corroborated by the fashionable assemblage then enjoying the hospitalities of Mrs. Cronan's tea-table. There they were, with a single exception, the same goodly company already presented to the reader in an early chapter of our story. We have already mentioned the great changes which time had worked in the appearance of the little watering-place. The fostering care of proprietorship withdrawn, the ornamental villa of the Martins converted into a miserable village inn, the works of the pier and harbour suspended, and presenting in their unfinished aspect the dreary semblance of ruin and decay; all conspired with the falling fortunes of the people to make the scene a sad one. Little evidence of this decline, however could be traced in the aspect of that pleasant gathering, animated with all its ancient taste for whist, scandal, and shrimps; their appetite for such luxuries seeming rather to have increased than diminished by years. Not that we presume to say they could claim any immunity against the irrevocable decrees of age. Unhappily, the confession may be deemed not exactly in accordance with gallantry; but it is strictly true, time had no more forgotten the living than the inanimate accessories of the picture. Miss Busk, of the Emporium, had grown more sour and more stately. The vinegar of her temperament was verging upon verjuice, and the ill opinion of mankind experience enforced, had written itself very legibly on her features. The world had not improved upon her by acquaintance. Not so Captain Bodkin; fatter and more wheezy than ever, he seemed to relish life rather more than when younger; he had given up, too, that long struggle with himself about bathing, and making up his mind to suffer no "sea change;" he was, therefore, more cheerful than before.

As for Mrs. Cronan, "the little comforts she was used to" had sorely diminished by the pressure of the times, and, in consequence, she drew unlimited drafts upon the past to fill up the deficiencies of the present. Strange enough is it, that the faults and follies of society are just as adhesive ingredients as its higher qualities! These people had grown so used to each other in all their eccentric ways and oddities, that they had become fond of them; like a pilot long accustomed to rocks and sandbanks, they could only steer their course where there was something to avoid!

The remainder of the goodly company had grown stouter or thinner, jollier or more peevish, as temperament inclined; for it is with human nature as with wine, if the liquor does not get racier with years, it degenerates sadly.

The first act of the whist and backgammon playing was over, and the party now sat, stood, crouched, lounged, or lay, as chance and the state of the furniture permitted, at supper. At the grand table, of course, were the higher dignitaries; such as Father Maher, the Captain, Miss Busk, and Mrs. Clinch; but cockles were eaten, and punch discussed in various very odd quarters; bursts of joyous laughter, too, came from dark pantries, and sounds of merriment mingled with the jangling crash of kitchen utensils. Reputations were roasted and pancakes fried—characters and chickens alike mangled—and all the hubbub of a festival prevailed, in a scene where the efforts of the fair hostess were directed to produce an air of unblemished elegance and gentility.

Poor Clinch, the revenue officer, who invariably eat what he called "his bit" in some obscure quarter, alone and companionless, was twice "had up" before the authorities for the row and uproar that prevailed, and underwent a severe cross-examination, "as to where he was when Miss Cullenane was making the salad?" and, indeed, cut a very sorry figure at the conclusion of the inquiry. All the gaieties and gravities of the scene, however, gradually toned down as the serious debate of the evening came on; which was no other than the lamentable condition of the prospects of Kilkieran, and the unanimous opinion of the ruinous consequences that must ensue from the absence of the proprietor.

"We've little chance of getting up the news-room now," said the captain. "The Martins won't give a sixpence for anything."

"It is something to give trade an impulse we want, sir," broke in Miss Busk: "balls and assemblies; evening reunions of the *élite* of society, where the elegance of the toilet should rival the *distingué* air of the company."

"That's word for word out of the *Intelligence*," cried the captain. "It's unparliamentary to quote the newspapers."

"I detest the newspapers," broke in Miss Busk, angrily "after advertising the Emporium for two seasons in the *Galway Celt*, they gave me a leading article beginning, 'As the hot weather is now commencing, and the season for fashion approaches, we cannot better serve the interests of our readers than by directing attention to the elegant "Symposium!"' Symposium!—I give you my word of honour that's what they put it."

"On my conscience! it might have been worse," chuckled out the captain.

"It was young Nelligan explained to me what it was," resumed Miss Busk; "and Scanlan said, 'I'd have an action against them for damages.'"

"Keep out of law, my dear!—keep out of law!" sighed Mrs. Cronan. "See to what it has reduced me! I, that used to go out in my own coach, with two men in green and gold—that had my house in town, and my house in the country—that had gems and ornaments, such as a queen might wear! And there's all that's left me now!" And she pointed to a brooch about the size of a cheese-plate, where a melancholy gentleman in uniform was represented, with a border of mock pearls around him. "The last pledge of affection!" sobbed she.

"Of course you wouldn't pledge it, my dear," muttered the deaf, old Mrs. Few; "and they'd give you next to nothing on it, besides."

"We'll have law enough here soon, it seems," said Mrs. Cronan, angrily, for the laugh this blunder excited was by no means flattering and pleasant. "There's Magennis's action first for trial at the Assizes."

"That will be worth hearing," said Mrs. Clinch. "They'll have the first lawyers from Dublin on each side."

"Did you hear the trick they played off on Joe Nelligan about it?" asked the captain. "It was cleverly done. Magennis found out, some way or other, that Joe wanted to be engaged against him, and so what does he do but gets a servant dressed up in the Martin livery, and sends him to Joe's house on the box of a coach, inside of which was a gentleman that begged a word with the Counsellor. 'You're not engaged, I hope, Counsellor Nelligan,' says he, 'in Magennis against Martin?' 'No,' says Joe, for he caught a glimpse of the livery. 'You're quite free?' says the other. 'Quite free,' says he. 'That's all I want, then,' says he; 'here's your brief, and here's your retainer;' and he put both down on the table, and when Joe looked down he saw he was booked for Magennis. You may imagine how he felt, but he never uttered a word, for there was no help for it."

"And do you mean to tell me," cried Mrs. Clinch, "that the lawyers can't help themselves, but must just talk, and rant, and swear for any one that asks them first?"

"It's exactly what I mean, ma'am," responded the captain. "They've no more choice in the matter than the hangman has as to who he'll hang."

"Then I'd as soon be a guager!" exclaimed the lady, with a contemptuous glance at poor Clinch, who winced under the observation.

"But I don't see what they wanted young Nelligan for," said Miss Busk, "what experience or knowledge has *he?*"

"He's just the first man of the day," said Bodkin. "They tell me that whether it be to crook out a flaw in the enemy's case, to pick a hole in a statement, to crush a witness, or cajole the jury, old Repton himself isn't his equal."

"I suppose, from the airs he gives himself, he must be something wonderful," said Mrs. Cronan.

"Well, now, I differ from you there, ma'am," replied Bodkin. "I think Joe is just what he always was. He was cold, silent, and distant as a boy, and he's the same as a man. Look at him when he comes down here at the Assizes, down to the town where his father is selling glue, and hides, and tenpenny-nails, and he's just as easy and unconstrained as if the old man was lord of Cro' Martin Castle."

"That's the height of impertinence," broke in Miss Busk; "it's only real blood has any right to rise above the depreciating accidents of condition. I know it by myself."

"Well, I wonder what he'll make of this case, anyhow," said

Bodkin, to escape a controversy he had no fancy for. "They tell me that no action can lie on it. It's not abduction——"

"For shame, captain; you forget there are ladies here," said Mrs. Clinch.

"Indeed I don't," sighed he, with a half-comic melancholy in his look.

"I'll tell you how they do it, sir," chimed in Father Maher; "whenever there's anything in law that never was foreseen or provided for, against which there is neither act nor statute, they've one grand and unfailing resource—they charge it as a conspiracy. I've a brother an attorney, and he tells me that there isn't a man, woman, or child in the kingdom but could be indicted for doing something by a conspiracy."

"It's a great comfort to know that," said Bodkin, gravely.

"And what can they do to her, if she's found guilty?" asked Mrs. Cronan.

"Make her smart for the damages, ma'am; leave her something less to expend on perversion and interference with the people," said the priest. "The parish isn't the same since she began visiting this one and reading to that. Instead of respect and confidence in their spiritual guides, the people are running after a young girl with a head full of wild schemes and contrivances. We all know by this time how these things end, and the best receipt to make a Protestant begins, 'First, starve your Papist.'"

"I rise to order," called out Bodkin. "We agreed we'd have no polemics nor party discussions."

"Why am I appealed to, then, for explanations that involve them?" cried the priest, angrily. "I'm supported, too, in my observations by a witness none will dispute—that Scotchman Henderson——"

"By the way, isn't his daughter come home to him?" asked Bodkin, eager for a diversion.

"Indeed she is, sir; and a pretty story there is about it, too. Miss Busk knows it all," said Mrs. Cronan.

"I have it in confidence, ma'am, from Jemima Davis—Lady Dorothea's second maid; but I don't think it a fit subject for public conversation."

"And ain't we in committee here?" chimed in Bodkin; "have we any secrets from each other?" The racy laugh of the old fellow, as he threw a knowing glance around the table, rather disconcerted the company. "Let's hear about Henderson's daughter."

"The story is soon told, sir. Lady Dorothea detected her endeavouring to draw young Martin into a private marriage. The artful creature, by some means or other, had obtained such an insight into the young man's difficulties that she actually terrorised over his weak mind. She discovered, too, it is, suspected, something rather more than indiscretions on his part."

A long low whistle from the priest seemed to impart a kind of gratified surprise at this announcement.

"He had got into a habit of signing his name, they say; and whether he signed it to something he had no right to, or signed another name by mistake——"

"Oh, for shame," broke in Bodkin; "that wouldn't be one bit like a Martin!"

"Perhaps you are acquainted with all the circumstances better than myself, sir?" said Miss Busk, bristling up with anger. "Maybe you've heard how the Henderson girl was turned away out of the French duke's family—how she was found in correspondence with the leaders of the mob in Paris? Maybe, sir, you are aware that she has some mysterious hold over her father, and he dares not gainsay one word she says?"

"I don't know one word of it; and, if it wasn't thought rude, I'd say, I don't believe it either," said Bobkin, stoutly.

"I believe the worst that could be said of her," said Mrs. Clinch.

"Well, well, make her as bad as you like; but how does that prove anything against young Martin? and if you can find nothing heavier to say of him than that he wanted to marry a very handsome girl——"

"A low creature!" broke in Miss Busk.

"The lowest of the low!" chimed in Mrs. Cronan.

"An impudent, upsetting minx!" added Mrs. Clinch. "Nothing would serve her but a post-chaise the morning she arrived by the mail for Dublin; and, signs on it, when she got home she hadn't money to pay for it!"

"It wasn't that she left her place empty-handed, then," said Miss Busk. "Jemima tells me that she managed the whole house—paid for everything; and we all know what comes of that."

Miss Busk, in delivering this sentiment, was seated with her back to the door, towards which suddenly every eye was now turned in mingled astonishment and confusion; she moved round to see the cause, and there beheld the very object of her commentary standing close behind her chair. Closely wrapped in a large cloak, the hood of which she wore over her head, her tall figure looked taller and more imposing in its motionless attitude.

"I have to ask pardon for this intrusion, ladies," said she, calmly, "but you will forgive me when I tell the reason of it. I have just received very sad tidings, which ought to be conveyed to Miss Martin; she is at the islands, and I have no means of following her, unless Mr. Clinch will kindly lend me the revenue-boat——"

"And accompany you, I hope," broke in Mrs. Clinch, with a sneer.

Kate did not notice the taunting remark, but went on: "You will be grieved to hear that Mr. Martin is no more."

"Martin dead!" muttered the captain.

"Dead! When did he die?" "Where did it happen?" "How?" "Of what malady?" "Are his remains coming home?" were asked in quick succession by several voices.

"This letter will tell you all that I know myself," said she, laying it on the table. "May I venture to hope Mr. Clinch will so far oblige me? The fishermen say the sea is too rough for their craft."

"It's not exactly on the King's service, I opine, ma'am," broke in Mrs. Clinch; "but of course he is too gallant to oppose yonr wishes."

"Faith! if you wanted any one with you, and would accept of myself," broke in Bodkin, "I'm ready this minute; not that exactly salt water is my element."

"The young lady is accustomed to travel alone, or she is much belied," said Miss Busk, with a sneer.

"I suppose you'd better let her have the boat, Clinch," said his wife, in a whisper. "There's no knowing what might come of it if you refused."

"I'll go down and muster the crew for you, Miss Henderson," said Clinch, not sorry to escape, although the exchange was from a warm cabin to the beating rain without.

"Poor Martin!" sighed Bodkin; "he was the first of the family for many a long year that didn't breathe his last under his own roof. I'm sure it weighed heavily on him."

"I trust his son will follow his example, nevertheless," said the priest. "I don't want to see one of the name amongst us."

"You might have worse, Father Maher," said Bodkin, angrily.

And now a lively discussion ensued as to the merits of him they had lost, for the most part with more of charity than many of their dissertations; from this they branched off into speculations about the future. Would the "present man" reside at home—would her ladyship come back—what would be Mary's position—how would Scanlan fare—what of Henderson, too? In fact, casualties of every kind were debated, and difficulties started, that they might be as readily reconciled. Meanwhile, Kate was hastening down to the shore, followed, rather than escorted, by little Clinch, who, even in the darkness, felt that the conjugal eye was upon him.

CHAPTER LX.

THE BRANNOCK ISLANDS.

A LITTLE to the north-west of the island of Innishmore are scattered a number of small islets, some scarcely more than barren rocks, called the Brannocks. One of these alone was inhabited, and that by a single family. No isolation could be more complete than that of these poor people, who thus dwelt amid the wide waste of waters, never seeing the face of a stranger, and only, at long intervals, visiting the mainland. Indeed, the only intercourse they could be said to maintain with their fellow-men was, when by chance they fell in with some homeward-bound ship at sea, and sold the little produce of their nets, for they lived by fishing, and had no other subsistence.

The largest of these islands was called "Brannock-buoy," or the Yellow Brannock, from the flower of a kind of crocus which grew profusely over it. It was a wild, desolate spot, scarcely rising above the waves around it, save in one quarter, where a massive column of rock rose to the height of several hundred feet, and formed the only shelter against the swooping wind, which came without break or hindrance from the far-away shores of Labrador. At the foot of this strong barrier—so small and insignificant as to escape notice from the sea—stood the little cabin of Owen Joyce. Built in a circular form, the chimney in the middle, the rude structure resembled some wigwam of the Prairies rather than the home of civilised beings.

Certain low partitions within subdivided the space into different chambers, making the centre the common apartment of the family, where they cooked, and ate, and chatted; for, with all their poverty and privation, theirs was a life not devoid of its own happiness, nor did they believe that their lot was one to repine at.

Seasons of unprofitable labour, years of more or less pressure, they had indeed experienced, but, actual want had never visited them; sickness, too, was almost as rare. Owen Joyce was, at the time we speak of, upwards of eighty; and although his hair was white as snow, his cheek was ruddy, his white teeth were perfect, and his eye—like that of Moses—"was not dim." Surrounded by his children and grandchildren, the old man lived happy and contented, his daily teaching being to impress upon them the blessings they derived from a life so sheltered from all the accidents of fortune; to have, as he called the island, "the little craft all their own."

The traits of race and family, the limited range of their intercourse with the world, served to make them all wonderfully alike, not only in feature but expression; so that even the youngest child had something of the calm, steadfast look which characterised the old man. The jet-black hair and eyes, and the swarthy skin, seemed to indicate a Spanish origin, and gave them a type perfectly distinctive and peculiar.

In the midst of them moved one, who, though dressed in the light-blue woollen kirtle, the favourite costume of the islands, bore in her fresh bright features the traces of a different blood; her deep blue eye, soft, and almost sleepy, her full, well-curved lips, were strong contrasts to the traits around her. The most passing glance would have detected that she was not "one of them," nor had she been long an inmate of this dwelling.

It chanced that some short time before, one of Joyce's sons, in boarding an outward-bound American ship, had heard of a young countrywoman, who, having taken her passage for New York, no sooner found herself at sea—parted, as she deemed it, for ever from home and country—than she gave way to the most violent grief; so poignant, indeed, was her sorrow, that the captain compassionately offered to relinquish her passage-money if Joyce would take charge of her, and re-land her on the shores of Ireland. The offer was accepted, and the same evening saw her safely deposited on the rocky island of Brannock. Partly in gratitude to her deliverer, partly in the indulgence of a secret wish, she asked leave to remain with them, and be their servant: the compact was agreed to, and thus was she there.

Theirs was not a life to engender the suspicions and distrusts which are current in the busier walks of men. None asked her a reason for her self-banishment, none inquired whether the cause of her exile was crime or misfortune. They had grown to feel attachment to her for the qualities of her gentle, quiet nature, a mild submissive temper, and a disposition to oblige, that forgot nothing, save herself. Her habits had taught her resources and ways which their isolated existence had denied them, and she made herself useful by various arts, which, simple as they were, seemed marvellous to the apprehension of her hosts, and thus, day by day, gaining on their love and esteem, they came at length to regard her with an affection mingled with a sort of homage.

Poor Joan Landy—for we have not to explain that it was she—was happy—happier than ever she had been before. The one great sorrow of her life was, it is true, treasured in her heart; her lost home, her blighted hope, her severed affection—for she actually loved Magennis—were griefs over which she wept many an hour in secret; but there was a sense of duty, a conscious feeling of rectitude that supported her in her sacrifice, and as she thought of her old grandfather's death-bed, she could say to her heart, "I have been true to my word with him."

The unbroken quiet, the unchanging character of the life she led—its very duties following a routine that nothing ever disturbed—gave her ample time for thought; and thought, though tinged with melancholy, has its own store of consolation; and if poor Joan sorrowed, she sorrowed like one who rather deplored the past than desired to re-live it! As time wore on, a dreamy indistinctness seemed to spread itself over the memory of her former life: it appeared little other than a mind-drawn picture. Nothing actual or tangible remained to convince her of its reality. It was only at rare intervals, and in the very clearest weather, the outline of the mountains of the mainland could be seen, and when she did behold them, they brought only some vague recollection to her: and so, too, the memories of her once home came through the haze of distance, dim and indistinct.

It was at the close of a day in June that the Joyces sat in front of the little cabin, repairing their nets, and getting their tackle in readiness for the sea. For some time previous the weather had been broken and unfavourable. Strong west winds and heavy seas—far from infrequent in these regions, even in midsummer—had rendered fishing impracticable; but now, the aspect of a new moon, rising full an hour before sunset, gave promise of better, and old Joyce had got the launch drawn up on shore to refit, and sails were spread out upon the rocks to dry, and coils of rope, and anchors, and loose spars littered the little space before the door. The scene was a busy, and not an unpicturesque one. There was every age, from the oldest to very infancy, all active—all employed. Some were caulking the seams of the boat, others overhauled sails and cordage, some were preparing the nets, attaching cork floats or sinkers, and two chubby urchins, mere infants, laughing, fed the fire that blazed beneath a large pitch-pot, the light blue smoke rising calmly into the air, and telling those far away that the lone rock was not without inhabitants. To all seeming, these signs of life and habitation had attracted notice, for a small boat which had quitted Innishmore for the mainland some time before, now altered her course, and was seen slowly bearing up towards the Brannocks. Though the sea was calm and waveless, the wind was only sufficient to waft her along at the slowest rate; a twinkling flash of the sea at intervals showed, however, that her crew were rowing, and at length the measured beat of the oars could be distinctly heard.

Many were the speculations of those who watched her course. They knew she was not a fishing craft, her light spars and white sails were sufficient to refute that opinion. Neither was she one of the revenue-boats. What could she be, then, since no large ship was in sight to which she could have belonged? It is only to those who have at some one period or other of life sojourned in some lone spot of earth, away from human intercourse, that the anxiety of these poor people could be intelligible. If, good reader—for to you we now appeal—it has not been your lot to have once on a time lived remote from the world and its ways, you cannot imagine how intensely interesting can become the commonest of those incidents which mark ordinary existence. They assume, indeed, very different proportions from the real, and come charged with innumerable imaginings about that wondrous life, far, far away, where there are thoughts and passions, and deeds and events, which never enter into the dreamland of exile! It was a little after sunset that the boat glided into the small creek which formed the only harbour of the island, and the moment after, a young girl sprang on the shore, and hastened towards them.

Before the Joyces had recovered from their first surprise, they saw Joan burst from the spot, and, rushing down the slope, throw herself at the stranger's feet.

"And have I found you at last, dear Joan," cried a soft, low voice, while the speaker raised her tenderly from the ground, and took her hand kindly within both her own.

"Oh, Miss Mary, to think you'd come after me this far! over the say!" burst out Joan, sobbing through her joy; for joy it was that now lit up her features, and made her eyes sparkle even through the fresh tears that filled them.

"They told me you had sailed from Galway," resumed Mary, "and I wrote to the ship-agent and found it was correct: your name was in the list of passengers, and the date of the day you sailed; but I know not how it was, Joan, I still clung to the notion that you had contrived this plan to escape being discovered, and that you were concealed somewhere along the coast or in the islands. I believe I used to dream of this at first, but at last I thought of it all day long."

"Thought of *me* all day long?" broke in Joan, sobbing.

"And why not, poor child? Was I not the cause of your leaving your home? Was it not my persuasion that induced you to leave the roof that sheltered you? I have often wondered whether I had right and reason on my side. I know at the time I believed I had such. At all events, but for me you had never quitted that home; but see, Joan, how what we are led to do with an honest purpose, if it fail to effect what we had in view, often leads to better and happier ends than we ever dreamed of. I only thought of conveying to you the last message of your poor grandfather. I little imagined how so simple an act could influence all your future fortune in life; and such it has done. Mr. Magennis, suspecting or discovering what share I had in your flight, has begun a law proceeding against me, and to give him a rightful claim for redress, has declared you to be—all that you wish, dear Joan—his lawful, wedded wife."

It was some time before the poor girl could stifle the sobbing which burst from her very heart. She kissed Mary's hands over and over with rapture, and cried out at length, in broken, faltering accents, "Didn't they say well that called you a saint from heaven? Didn't they tell truth that said, God gave you as a blessing to us?"

"My poor Joan, you are grateful to me for what I have no share in. I am nothing but the bearer of good tidings. But tell me, how have you fared since we parted? Let me hear all that has happened to you."

Joan told her simple story in a few words, never deviating rom the narrative, save to speak her heartfelt gratitude to the or people who had sheltered and befriended her.

"There they are!" cried she, pointing to the group, who, with a delicacy of sentiment that might have graced the most refined class, sat apart, never venturing by a look to obtrude upon the confidence of the others—"there they are, and if the world was like them, life wouldn't have many crosses!"

Mary rose, and drew nigh the old man, who stood up respectfully to receive her.

"He doesn't know much English, Miss Mary," whispered Joan in her ear.

"Nor am I well skilled in Irish," said Mary, smiling; "but I'll do my best to thank him."

However imperfectly she spoke the native tongue, the words seemed to act like a charm on those who heard them; and as, young and old, they gathered around her, their eager looks and delighted faces beamed with a triumphant joy. They had learned from the boatmen that it was the young princess—as in the language of the people she was called—was before them, and their pride and happiness knew no bounds.

Oh! if courtiers could feel one tithe of the personal devotion to the Sovereign, that did these poor peasants to her they regarded as their chief, what an atmosphere of chivalry would breathe within the Palace of Royalty! There was nothing they would not have done or dared at her bidding; and as she crossed their threshold, and sat down beside their hearth, the tears of joy that rose to every eye showed that this was an event to be treasured till memory could retain no more!

If Mary did not speak the native dialect fluently, there was a grace and a charm about the turn of the expressions she used that never failed to delight those who heard her. That imaginative thread that runs through the woof of Irish nature in every rank and condition of life—more conspicuous, probably, in the very humblest—imparted an intense pleasure to hearing and listening to her; and she, on her side, roused and stimulated by the adventurous character of the incident, the strange wild spot, the simple people, their isolation and their innocence, spoke with a warmth and an enthusiasm that were perfectly captivating.

She had seen much of the peasantry—known them in the most unfrequented tracts—remote from all their fellow-men—in far-away glens, by dreary mountains, where no footpaths led; but anything so purely simple and unsophisticated as these poor people, she had never met with. The sons had been —and that rarely, too—on the mainland, but the children and their mothers had never left the Brannocks; they had never beheld a tree, nor even a flower, save the wild crocus on their native rock. With what eager delight, then, did they hear Mary describe the gardens of the Castle, pictures that glowed with all the gorgeous colours of a fairy tale. "You shall all come and see me, some of these days. I'll send you a messenger, to say the time," said Mary; "and I'll promise that what you'll witness will be far above my description of it!"

It was a sad moment when Mary arose to say good-by. Joan, too, was to accompany her, and the grief at parting with her was extreme. Again and again the children clung round her, entreating her not to leave them; and she herself half faltered in her resolution. That lonely rock, that rude cabin, had been her refuge in the darkest hour of her life, and she felt the superstitious terror of her class at now deserting them.

"Come, come, dear Joan, remember that you have a home now that you can rightfully return to," whispered Mary. "It is not in shame, but in honour, that you go back to it."

It was already dark ere they left the Brannocks: a long, heavy swell, too, the signs of a storm, coming from the westward, made the boatmen eager to hasten their departure. As yet, however, the air was calm and still, but it was with that oppressive stillness that forebodes change. They hoisted their sail, but soon saw that they must, for a while at least, trust to their oars. The unbroken stillness, save by the measured stroke of the rowers, the dense dark atmosphere, and the reaction, after a day of toil and an event of a most moving kind, so overcame Mary, that, leaning on Joan's shoulder, she fell off fast asleep. For a while, Joan, proud of the burden she supported, devoted all her care to watch and protect her from the night air, but at last weariness stole over herself, and she dropped off to slumber.

Meanwhile, the sea was rising; heavy waves struck the boat, and washed over her in sheets of spray, although no wind was stirring.

"We'll have rain, or a gale of wind before long," said one of the men.

"There's some heavy drops falling now," muttered another "Throw that sail over Miss Mary, for it will soon come down heavily."

A loud clap of thunder burst forth, and as suddenly, like a torrent, the rain poured down, hissing over the dark sea, and filling the air with a dull, discordant noise. Still they slept on, nor heard nor felt aught of that gathering storm.

"There now, sure enough, it's coming," cried a boatman, as the sail shook tremulously; and two great waves, in quick succession, broke over the bow.

"We'll have to run for Innishmore," said another, "and lucky if we get there before it comes on worse!"

"You ought to wake her up, Loony, and ask her what we are to do."

"I'll make straight for the harbour of Kilkieran," replied the helmsman. "The wind is with us, and she's a good seaboat. Take in the jib, Maurice, and we'll shorten all sail on her, and——"

The rest of his speech was drowned in the uproar of a tremendous sea, which struck the boat on her quarter and nearly overset her. Not another word was now uttered, as, with the instinct of their calling, they set about to prepare for the coming conflict. The mainsail was quickly lowered and reefed, the oars and loose spars secured, and then, seating themselves in the bottom of the boat, they waited in silence. By this time the rain had passed over, and a strong wind swept over the sea.

"She's going fast through the water, anyway!" said one of the men. But though the speech was meant to cheer, none felt or acknowledged the encouragement.

"I'd rather than own Cro' Martin Castle Miss Mary was safe at home!" said Loony, as he drew the rough sleeve of his coat across his eyes, "for it's thicker it's getting over yonder!"

"It would be a black day that anything happened her!" muttered another.

"Musha! we've wives and childer," said a third, "but she's worth a thousand of us!"

And thus, in broken whispers, they spoke; not a thought save of her, not a care save for her safety. They prayed, too, fervently, and her name was in all their supplications.

"She's singing to herself in her sleep," whispered Loony. And the rough sailors hushed to hear her.

Louder and louder, however, grew the storm, sheets of spray and drift falling over the boat in showers, and all her timbers quivering as she laboured in the stormy sea. A sailor whispered something in Loony's ear, and he grumbled out in reply, "Why would I wake her up?"

"But I *am* awake, Loony," said Mary, in a low, calm voice, "and I see all our danger; but I see, too, that you are meeting it like brave men, and, better still, like good ones."

"The men was thinking we ought to bear up for Innishmore, Miss Mary," said Loony, as though ashamed of offering on his own part such counsel.

"You'll do what you think best and safest for us all, Loony."

"But you were always the captain, miss, when you were aboord!" replied he, with an effort to smile.

"And so I should be now, Loony, but that my heart is too full, to be as calm and resolute as I ought to be. This poor thing had not been here now, but for *me*." And she wrapped her shawl around Joan as she spoke. "Maybe it's anxiety, perhaps fatigue, but I have not my old courage to-night!"

"Faix! it will never be fear that will distress you," said he.

"If you mean for myself and my own safety, Loony, you are right. It is not for me to repine at the hour that calls me away, but I cannot bear to think how you and others, with so many dear to you, should be perilled just to serve *me!* And poor Joan, too, at the moment when life was about to brighten for her!" She held down her head for a minute or two, and then suddenly, as it were, rallying, she cried out, "The boat is labouring too much for'ard, Loony: set the jib on her!"

"To be sure, if you ordher it, Miss Mary; but she has more sail now than she can carry."

"Set the jib, Loony. I know the craft well; she'll ride the waves all the lighter for it. If it were but daylight, I almost think I'd enjoy this. We've been out in as bad before."

Loony shook his head as he went forward to bend the additional sail.

"You see she won't bear it, miss," cried he, as the boat plunged fearfully into the trough of the sea.

"Let us try," said she, calmly: "stand by, ready to slack off, if I give the word." And so saying, she took the tiller from the sailor, and seated herself on the weather-gunwale. "There, see how she does it now! Ah, Loony, confess, I am the true pilot. I knew my nerve would come back when I took my old post here. I was always a coward in a carriage, if I wasn't on the box and the reins in my hands: and the same at sea. Sit up to windward, men, and don't move; never mind baling, only keep quiet."

"Miss Mary was right," muttered one of the men; "the head-sail is drawing her high out of the water!"

"Is that dark mass before us cloud, or the land?" cried she.

"It's the mountains, miss. There, to the left, where you see the dip in the ridge, that's Kilkieran. I think I see the lights on shore now."

"I see them now myself," cried Mary. "Oh, how the sight of land gives love of life! They called earth truly who named her mother!" said she to herself. "What was that which swept past us, Loony?"

"A boat, miss; and they're hailing us now," cried he, peeping over the gunwale. "They've put her about, and are following our course. They came out after us."

"It was gallantly done, on such a night as this! I was just thinking to myself that poor old Mat Landy would have been out, were he living. You must take the tiller now, Loony, for I don't understand the lights on shore."

"Because they're shifting every minute, miss. It's torches they have, and they're moving from place to place; but we'll soon be safe, now."

"Let us not forget this night, men," said Mary, in a fervent voice. And then, burying her face within her hands, she spoke no more.

It was already daybreak when they gained the little harbour, well-nigh exhausted, and worn out with fatigue and anxiety. As for Mary, wet through and cold, she could not rise from her seat without assistance, and almost fainted as she put her foot on shore. She turned one glance seaward to where the other boat was seen following them, and then, holding Joan's hand, she slowly toiled up the rocky ascent to the village. To the crowd of every age that surrounded her she could only give a faint, sickly smile of recognition, and they, in deep reverence, stood without speaking, gazing on her wan features and the dripping garments which clung to her.

"No, not to the inn, Loony," said she, to a question from him; "the first cabin we meet will shelter us, and then—home!" There was something of intense sorrow in the thought that passed then through her mind, for her eyes suddenly filled up, and heavy tears rolled along her cheeks. "Have they got in, yet?" said she, looking towards the sea.

"Yes, miss; they're close alongside now. It's the revenue boat that went after us."

"Wirra, wirra! but that's bad news for her now," muttered a boatman, in conversation with an old woman at his side.

"What's the bad news, Patsey?" said Mary, overhearing him.

But the man did not dare to answer, and though he looked around on every side, none would speak for him.

"You used to be more frank with me," said Mary, calmly. "Tell me what has happened."

Still not a word was uttered, a mournful silence brooded over the crowd, and each seemed to shun the task of breaking it.

"You will make me fear worse than the reality, perhaps," said she, tremulously. "Is the calamity near home? No. Is it then my uncle?" A low faint cry burst from her, and she dropped down on her knees; but scarcely had she joined her hands to pray, than she fell back, fainting to the ground.

They carried her, still insensible as she was, into a fisherman's cabin, till they went in search of a conveyance to take her to the cottage.

CHAPTER LXI.

A LETTER FROM MASSINGBRED.

"Martin Arms, Oughterard.

"In spite of all your reasonings, all your cautions, and all your warnings, here I am once more, Harry, denizen of the little dreary parlour whence I first looked out at Dan Nelligan's shop something more than a year since. What changes of fortune has that brief space accomplished! what changes has it effected even in my own nature! I feel this is nothing more than in my altered relations with others. If the first evidence of amendment in a man be shame and sorrow for the past, I may probably be on the right road now, since I heartily grieve over the worthless, purposeless life I have led hitherto.

"I am well aware that you would not accept the reason I gave you for coming here. You said that, as to taking leave of my constituents, a letter was the ordinary and the sufficient course. You also hinted that our intercourse had not been of that close and friendly nature which requires a personal farewell, and then you suggested that other and less defensible motives had probably their share in this step. Well, you are right, perfectly right; I wanted to see the spot which has so far exerted an immense influence over me; I wanted—if you will have the confession—to see *her* too—to see her in the humble station she belongs to—in the lowly garb of the steward's daughter. I was curious to ascertain what change her bearing would undergo in the change of position; would she conform to the lowlier condition at once and without struggle, or would her haughty nature chafe and fret against the obstacles of a small and mean existence? If you were right in guessing this, you are equally wrong in the motive you ascribe to me. Not, indeed, that you palpably express, but only hint at it; still I cannot endure even the shadow of such a surmise without a flat and full denial. Perhaps, after all, I have mistaken your meaning—would it were so! I do indeed wish that you should not ascribe to me motives so unworthy and so mean. A revenge for her refusal of me! a reprisal for the proud rejection of my hand and fortune! No, my dear Harry, I feel, as I write the words, that they never were yours. You say, however, that I am curious to know if I should think her as lovable and attractive in the humble dress and humble station that pertain to her, as when I saw her moving more than equal amongst the proudest and haughtiest of Europe. To have any doubt on this score would be to distrust her sincerity of character. She must be what I have ever seen her, or she is an actress. Difference of condition, different associates, different duties will exact different discipline, but she herself must be the same, or she is a falsehood—a deception.

"And then you add, it is perhaps as well that I should 'submit to the rude test of a disenchantment.' Well, I accept the challenge, and I am here.

"These thoughts of self would obtrude in the very beginning of a letter I had destined for other objects. You ask me for a narrative of my journey and its accidents, and you shall have it. On my way over here in the packet, I made acquaintance with an elderly man, who seemed thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstances of the Martins and their misfortunes. From him I ascertained that all Scanlan had told me was perfectly correct. The reversion of the estate has been sold for a sum incredibly small in proportion to its value, and in great part the proceeds of gambling transactions. Martin is, therefore, utterly, irretrievably ruined. Merl has taken every step with all the security of the best advice, and in a few months, weeks perhaps, will be declared owner of Cro' Martin. Even in the 'fast times' we live in, such rapid ruin as this stands alone! You tell me that of your own college and mess associates not more than one in five or six have survived the wreck of fortune the first few years of extravagance accomplish, and that Manheim, Brussels, and Munich can show the white-seamed, mock-smartened-up gentilities which once were the glories of Bond-street and the Park; but for poor Martin, I suspect, even these last sanctuaries do not remain—as I hear it, he is totally gone.

"From the very inn where I am staying Merl's agents are issuing notices of all kinds to the tenants and 'others' to desist and refrain from cutting timber, quarrying marbles, and what not, on certain unspeakable localities, with threats in case of non-compliance. Great placards cover the walls of the town, headed, 'Caution to all Tenants on the Estate of Cro' Martin.' The excitement in the neighbourhood is intense—overwhelming, Whatever differences of political opinion existed between the Martins and the people of the borough, whatever jealousies grew out of disparity of station, seemed suddenly merged in sympathy for this great misfortune. They are, of course, ignorant of the cause of this sudden calamity, and ask each other how, when, and where such a fortune became engulphed.

"But to proceed regularly. On my reaching Dublin, after a hurried visit to my father, I drove off to Mr. Repton's house. You may remember his name as that of the old lawyer, some of whose bar stories amused you so highly. I found him in a spacious mansion of an old neglected street—Henrietta-street—once the great aristocratic quarter of Ancient Dublin, and even to this day showing traces of real splendour. The old man received me in a room of immense proportions, furnished as it was when Flood was the proprietor. He was at luncheon when I entered; and for company had the very same stranger with whom I made acquaintance in the packet.

"Repton started as we recognised each other, but at a sign or a word, I'm not certain which, from the other, merely said, 'My friend was just speaking of his having met you, Mr. Massingbred.' This somewhat informal presentation over, I joined them, and we fell a chatting over the story of Cro' Martin.

"They were both eager to hear something about Merl, his character, pursuits, and position; and you would have been amazed to see how surprised they were at my account of a man whose type we are all so familiar with.

"You would scarcely credit the unfeigned astonishment manifested by these two shrewd and crafty men at the sketch I gave them of our Hebrew friend. One thing is quite clear, it was not the habit, some forty or fifty years ago, to admit the Merls of the world to terms of intimacy, far less of friendship.

"'As I said, Repton,' broke in the stranger, sternly, 'It all comes of that degenerate tone which has crept in of late, making society like a tavern, where he who can pay his bill cannot be denied entrance. Such fellows as this Merl had no footing in our day. The man who associated with such would have forfeited his own place in the world.'

"'Very true,' said Repton; 'though we borrowed their money, we never bowed to them.'

"'And we did wisely, sir,' retorted the other. 'The corruption of their manners was fifty times worse than all their usury! The gallant Hussar Captain, as we see here, never scrupled about admitting to his closet intimacy a fellow not fit company for his valet. Can't you perceive that when a man will descend to such baseness to obtain money, there is no measuring the depth he will go to when pressed to pay it!'

"'I am intimate with Martin,' said I, interrupting, 'and I can honestly assure you that it was rather to an easy, careless, uncalculating disposition he owes his misfortunes, than to anything like a spendthrift habit.'

"'Mere hair-splitting this, sir,' replied he, almost rudely. 'He who spends what is not his own I have but one name for. It matters little in my estimation whether he extorts the supply by a bill or a bullet.'

"I own to you, Harry, I burned to retort to a speech the tone and manner of which were both more offensive than the words, but the stranger's age, his venerable appearance, and something like deep and recent sorrow about him, restrained me, and I caught, by a look from Repton, that he was grateful for my forbearance.

"'Come, sir,' said he, addressing me, 'you say you know Captain Martin; now let me ask you one question: Is there any one trait or feature of his character, to which, if his present misfortunes were to pass away, you could attach a hope of amendment? Has not this life of bill-renewing, these eternal straits for cash—with all the humiliations that accompany them—made him a mere creature of schemes and plots—a usurer in spirit, though a pauper in fact?'

"'When I say, sir, that you are addressing this demand to one whom Captain deems his friend, you will see the impropriety you have fallen into.'

"'My young friend is right,' broke in Repton. 'The Court rules against the question; nor would it be evidence even if answered.'

"I was angry at this interference of Repton's. I wanted to reply to this man myself; but still, as I looked at his sorrow-struck features, and saw what I fancied the marks of a proud suffering spirit, I was well satisfied at not having given way to temper; still more so did I feel as he turned towards me, and, with a manner of ineffable gentleness, said, 'I entreat you to pardon me, sir, for an outburst of which I am already ashamed. A rude life and some bitter experiences have made me hard of heart, and coarse in speech; still it is only in moments of forgetfulness that I cease to remember what indulgence he owes to others who has such need of forgiveness himself.'

"I grasped his hand at once, and felt that his pressed mine like a friend's.

"'You spoke of going down to the west," said he, after a brief pause. 'I start for that country to-night; you would do me a great favour should you accompany me.'

"I acceded at once, and he went on. 'Repton was to have been of the party, but business delays him a few days in town.'

"'I'll join you before the end of the week,' said Repton; 'by that time Mr. Massingbred will have expended all his borough blandishments and be free to give us his society.'

"Though the old lawyer now tried, and tried cleverly, to lead us away to lighter, pleasanter themes, the attempt was a failure; each felt, I suspect, some oppressive weight on his spirits that indisposed him to less serious talk, and again we came back to the Martins, the stranger evidently seeking to learn all he could of the disposition and temper of the young man.

"'It is as I thought,' said he, at last. 'It is the weak, sickly tone of the day has brought all this corruption upon us! Once upon a time the vices and follies of young men took their rise in their several natures—this one gambled, the other drank, and so on—the mass, however, was wonderfully sound and healthy; the present school, however, is to ape a uniformity, so that each may show himself in the livery of his fellows, thus imbibing wickedness he has no taste for, and none be less depraved and heartless than those around him. Let the women but follow the fashion, and there's an end of us, as the great people we boasted to be!'

"I give you, so well as I can trust my memory, his words, Harry, but I cannot give you a certain sardonic bitterness—a tone of mingled scorn and sorrow, such as I never before witnessed. He gave me the impression of being one who, originally frank, generous, and trustful, had, by intercourse with the world and commerce with mankind, grown to suspect every one and disbelieve in honesty, and yet could not bring his heart to acknowledge what his head had determined. In this wise, at least, I read his character from the opportunities I had of conversing with him on our journey. It was easy to see that he was a gentleman—taking the word in the widest of its acceptations—but from things that dropped from him, I could gather that his life had been that of an adventurer. He had been in the sea and land services of many of those new states of Southern America, had even risen to political importance in some of them; had possessed mines and vast tracts of territory, one day, and, the next, saw himself 'without a piastre.' He had conducted operations against the Indians, and made treaties with them, and latterly had lived as the elected chief of a tribe in the west of the Rocky Mountains. But he knew civilised as well as savage life, had visited Spain in the rank of an envoy, and was familiar with all the great society of Rome, and the intrigues of its prince-bishops. The only theme, however, on which he really warmed was sport. The prairies brought out all his enthusiasm, and then he spoke like one carried away by glorious recollections of a time when, as he said himself, 'heart, and hand, and eye never failed him.'

"When he spoke of family ties, or home affections, it was in a spirit of almost mockery, which puzzled me. His reasoning was, that the attachments we form are only emanations of our own selfishness. We love, simply to be loved again. Whereas, were we single-hearted, we should be satisfied to know that those dear to us were well and happy, and only seek to serve them without demonstration or display.

"Am I wearying you, Harry, by dwelling on the traits of a man who, for the brief space I have known him, has made the most profound impression upon me? Even where I dissent—as is often the case—from his views, I have to own to myself, that were I *he*, I should think and reason precisely as he does. I fancied at first that, like many men who had quitted civilised life for the rude ways of the 'bush,' he would have contrasted the man of refinement unfavourably with the savage, but he was too keen and acute for such a sweeping fallacy; he saw the good and evil in both, and sensibly remarked how independent of all education were the really strong characteristics of human nature. 'There is not a great quality of our first men,' said he, 'that I have not found to exist among the wild tribes of the Far West, nor is there an excellence of savage nature I have not witnessed amidst the polished and the pampered.'

"From what I can collect, he is only here passingly; some family matter has brought him over to this country; but he is already impatient to be back to his old haunts and associates, and his home beside the Orinoco. He has even asked me to come and visit him there; and from all I can see I should be as likely to attain distinction among the Chaymas as in the House of Commons, and should find the soft turf of the Savannahs as pleasant as the Opposition benches. In fact, Harry, I have half promised to accept his invitation; and if he renew it with anything like earnestness, I am resolved to go.

"I am just setting out for the Hendersons, and while the horses are being harnessed I have re-read your letter. Of course I have 'counted the cost'—I have weighed the question to a pennyweight! I could already write down the list of those who will not know me at all, those who will know me a little, and the still fewer who will know my wife! Can you not see, my dear friend, that where one drags the anchor so easily, the mooring-ground was never good? The society to which you belong by such slender attachments gives no wound by separation from it.

"My anxiety now is on a very different score: it is, that she will still refuse me. The hope I cling to is, that she will see in my persistence a proof of sincerity. I would not, if I could, bring any family influence to my aid, and yet, short of this, there is nothing I would not do to ensure success.

"I wish I had never reopened your letter; that vein of sarcastic coolness which runs through it will never turn me from my purpose. You seem to forget, besides, that you are talking to a man of the world, just as hackneyed, just as 'used up' as yourself. I should like to see you assume this indolent dalliance before La Henderson! Take my word for it, Harry, you'd be safer with the impertinence amongst some of your duchesses in Pall Mall. You say that great beauty in a woman, like genius in a man, is a kind of brevet nobility, and yet you add that the envy of the world will never weary of putting the possessor 'on his title.' How gladly would I accept this challenge. Ay, Harry, I tell you, in all defiance, that your proudest could not vie with her!

"If I wanted a proof of the vassalage of the social state we live in, I have it before me in the fact that a man like yourself, well-born, young, rich, and high-hearted, should place the judgments and prejudices of half a dozen old tabbies of either sex above all the promptings of a noble ambition—all the sentiments of a generous devotion. Your starling cry of 'the Steward's daughter,' then, does not deter, it only determines the purpose

"Of yours faithfully,

"JACK MASSINGBRED.

"You'll see by the papers that I have accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. This is the first step—now for the second!"

CHAPTER LXII.

A DINNER AT "THE LODGE."

While the *Morning Post* of a certain day, some twenty years ago, was chronicling the illustrious guests who partook of his Majesty's hospitalities at Windsor, the *Dublin Evening Mail*, under the less pretentious heading of "Viceregal Court," gave a list of those who had dined with his excellency at the Lodge.

There was not anything very striking or very new in the announcement. Our *dramatis personæ*, in this wise, are limited; and after the accustomed names of the Lord Chancellor and Mrs. Dobbs, the Master of the Rolls and Mrs. Wiggins, Colonel Somebody of the 105th, Sir Felix and Miss Slasher, you invariably find the catalogue close with an under-secretary, a king-at-arms, and the inevitable Captain Lawrence Belcour, the aide-de-camp in waiting!—these latter recorded somewhat in the same spirit that the manager of a provincial theatre swells the roll of his company, by the names of the machinist, the scene-painter, and the leader of the band! We have no peculiar concern, however, with this fact, save that on the day in question our old friend Joseph Nelligan figured as a viceregal guest. It was the first time he had been so honoured, and, although not a stamp to attach any great prize to the distinction, he was well aware that the recognition was intended as an honour; the more, when an aide-de-camp signified to him that his place at table was on one side of his excellency.

When this veracious history first displayed young Nelligan at a dinner-party, his manner was shy and constrained; his secluded, student-like habits had given him none of that hardihood so essential in society. If he knew little of passing topics, he knew less of the tone men used in discussing them; and now, although more conversant with the world and its ways, daily brought into contact with the business of life, his social manner remained pretty nearly the same cold, awkward, and diffident thing it had been at first. Enlist him in a great subject, or call upon him on a great occasion, and he could rise above it; place him in a position to escape notice, and you never heard more of him.

The dinner company on this day contained nothing very formidable, either on the score of station or ability. A few bar celebrities with their wives, an eccentric dean with a daughter, a garrison colonel or two, three country squires, and a doctor from Merion-square. It was that interregnal period between the time when the castle parties included the first gentry of the land, and that later era when the priest and the agitator became the favoured guests of viceroyalty. It is scarce necessary to say it was, as regards agreeability, inferior to either. There was not the courtly urbanity and polished pleasantry of a very accomplished class; nor was there the shrewd and coarse but racy intelligence of Mr. O'Connell's followers.

The Marquis of Reckington had come over to Ireland to "inaugurate," as the newspapers called it, a new policy; that is, he was to give to the working of the relief bill an extension and a significance which few either of its supporters or opposers in parliament ever contemplated. The inequality of the Romanist before the law he might have borne; social depreciation was a heavier evil, and one quite intolerable. Now, as the change to the new system required considerable tact and address, they entrusted the task to a most accomplished and well-bred gentleman, and were Ireland only to be won by dinner-parties, Lord Reckington must have been its victor.

To very high rank and great personal advantages he united a manner of the most perfect kind. Dignified enough always to mark his station and his own consciousness of it, it was cordial without effort, frank and easy without display. If he could speak with all the weight of authority, he knew how to listen with actual deference, and there was that amount of change and "play" in his demeanour that made his companion, whoever for the moment he might be, believe that his views and arguments had made a deep impression on the viceroy. To those unacquainted with such men, and the school to which they belong, there might have appeared something unreal, almost dramatic, in the elegant gracefulness of his bow, the gentle affability of his smile, the undeviating courtesy which he bestowed on all around him; but they were all of the man himself—his very instincts—his nature.

It had apparently been amongst his excellency's instructions from his government to seek out such rising men of the Roman Catholic party as might be elevated and promoted on the just claims of their individual merits—men, in fact, whose conduct and bearing would be certain to justify their selection for high office. It could not be supposed that a party long proscribed, long estranged from all participation in power, could be rich in such qualifications. At the bar, the ablest men usually threw themselves into the career of politics, and of course, by strong partisanship more or less prejudiced their claims to office. It was rare indeed to find one who, with the highest order of abilities, was satisfied to follow a profession whose best rewards were denied him. Such was Joseph Nelligan when he was first "called," and such he continued to the very hour we now see him. Great as had been his college successes, his triumphs at the bar overtopped them all. They who remembered his shy and reserved manner, wondered whence he came by his dignity; they who knew his youth could not imagine how he came by his "law."

Mr. M'Casky, the Castle law adviser, an old recruiting serjeant of capacities, who had "tipped the shilling" to men of every party, had whispered his name to the under-secretary, who had again repeated it to the viceroy. He was, as M'Casky said, "the man they wanted, with talent enough to confront the best of the opposite party, and wealthy enough to want nothing that can figure in a budget." Hence was he, then, there a favoured guest, and seated on his excellency's left hand.

For the magic influence of that manner which we have mentioned as pertaining to the viceroy, we ask for no better evidence than the sense of perfect ease which Joe Nelligan now enjoyed. The *suave* dignity of the marquis was blended with a something like personal regard, a mysterious intimation that seemed to say, "This is the sort of man I have long been looking for; how gratifying that I should have found him at last." They concurred in so many points, too, not merely in opinions, but actually in the very expressions by which they characterised them; and when at last his excellency, having occasion to quote something he had said, called him "Nelligan," the spell was complete.

Oh dear! when we torture our brains to legislate for apothecaries, endeavouring in some way or other to restrict the sale of those subtle ingredients, on every grain or drop of which a human life may hang, why do we never think of those far more subtle elements of which great people are the dispensers—flatteries more soothing than chloroform, smiles more lulling than poppy-juice! Imagine poor Nelligan under a course of this treatment, dear reader; fancy the delicious poison as it insinuates itself through his veins, and if you have ever been so drugged yourself, picture to your mind all the enjoyment he experienced.

By one of those adroit turns your social magician is master of, the viceroy had drawn the conversation towards Nelligan's county, and his native town.

"I was to have paid a visit to poor Martin, there," said he, "and I certainly should have looked in upon *you*."

Nelligan's cheek was in a flame; pride and shame were both there, warring for the mastery.

"Poor fellow!" said his excellency, who saw the necessity of a diversion, "I fear that he has left that immense estate greatly embarrassed. Some one mentioned to me, the other day, that the heir will not succeed to even a fourth of the old property."

"I have heard even worse, my lord," said Nelligan. "There is a rumour that he is left without a shilling."

"How very shocking! They are connexions of my own!" said the viceroy; as though what he said made the misery attain its climax.

"I am aware, my lord, that Lady Dorothea is related to your excellency, and I am surprised you have not heard the stories I allude to."

"But perhaps I am incorrect," said the marquis. "It may be that I *have* heard them; so many things pass through one's ears every day. But here is Colonel Massingbred; he's sure to know it. Massingbred, we want some news of the Martins—the Martins of—what is it called?"

"Cro' Martin, my lord," said Nelligan, reddening.

"I hold the very latest news of that county in my hand," my lord, replied the secretary. "It is an express from my son, who writes from Oughterard."

Nelligan stood, scarcely breathing, with impatience to hear the tidings.

Colonel Massingbred ran his eyes over the first page of the letter, murmuring to himself the words; then turning over, he said, "Yes, here it is—'While I write this, the whole town is in a state of intense excitement; the magistrates have sent in for an increased force of police, and even soldiery, to repress some very serious disturbances on the Martin property. It would appear that Merl—the man who assumes to claim the property, as having purchased the reversion from young Martin—was set upon by a large mob, and pursued, himself and his friends, for several miles across the country. They escaped with their lives; but have arrived here in a lamentable plight. There is really no understanding these people. It was but the other day, and there was no surer road to their favour than to abuse and villify these same Martins, and now, they are quite ready to murder any one who aspires to take their place. If one was to credit the stories afloat, they have already wreaked a fatal vengeance on some fellows employed by Merl to serve notices on the tenantry; but I believe that the outrages have really gone no further than such maltreatment as Irishmen like to give, and are accustomed to take.'"

Here his excellency laughed heartily, and Joe Nelligan looked grave.

Massingbred read on: "'Without being myself a witness to it, I never could have credited the almost feudal attachment of these people to an "Old House." The Radical party in the borough are, for the moment, proscribed, and dare not show themselves in the streets; and even Magennis, who so lately figured as an enemy to the Martins, passed through the town this morning with his wife, with a great banner flying over his jaunting-car, inscribed "The Martins for Ever!" This burst of sentiment on his part, I ought to mention, was owing to a most devoted piece of heroism performed by Miss Martin, who sought out the lost one and brought her safely back, through a night of such storm and hurricane as few ever remember. Such an act, amidst such a people, is sure of its reward. The peasantry would, to a man, lay down their lives for her; and coming critically, as the incident did, just when a new proprietor was about to enforce his claim, you can fancy the added bitterness it imparted to their spirit of resistance. I sincerely trust that the magistrates will not accede to the demand for an increased force. A terrible collision is sure to be the result, and I know enough of these people to be aware of what can be done by a little diplomacy, particularly when the right negotiator is employed. I mean, therefore, to go over and speak to Mr. Nelligan, who is the only man of brains amongst the magistrates here.'"

"A relative, I presume," said his excellency.

"My father, my lord," replied Joe, blushing.

"Oh! here is the result of his interview," said Massingbred, turning to the foot of the page: "Nelligan quite agreed in the view I had taken, and said the people would assuredly disarm, and perhaps destroy any force we could send against them. He is greatly puzzled what course to adopt, and when I suggested the propriety of invoking Miss Martin's aid, told me that this is out of the question, since she is on a sick-bed. While we were speaking, a Dublin physician passed through on his way to visit her. This really does add to the complication, for she is, perhaps, the only one who could exert a great influence over the excited populace. In any other country it might read strangely, that it was to a young lady men should have recourse in a moment of such peril; but, this is like no other country! the people like no other people! the young lady herself, perhaps, like no other young lady!'"

By a scarcely perceptible movement of his head, and a very slight change of voice, Colonel Massingbred intimated to the viceroy that there was something for his private ear, and Lord Reckington stepped back to hear it. Nelligan, too deeply occupied in his own thoughts to remark the circumstance, stood in the same place, silent and motionless.

"It is to this passage," whispered the secretary, "I want to direct your excellency's attention: 'All that I see here,' my son writes—'all that I see here is a type of what is going on, at large, over the island. Old families uprooted, old ties severed; the people, with no other instinct than lawlessness, hesitating which side to take. Their old leaders only bent upon the political, have forgotten the social struggle, and thus, the masses are left without guidance or direction. It is my firm conviction that the Church of Rome will seize the happy moment to usurp an authority thus unclaimed, and the priest step in between the landlord and the demagogue; and it is equally my belief that you can only retard, not prevent, this consummation. If you should be of *my* opinion, and be able to induce his excellency to think with us, act promptly and decisively. Enlist the Roman Catholic Laity in your cause before you be driven to the harder compact of having to deal with the clergy. And first of all, make—for fortunately you have the vacancy—make young Nelligan your solicitor-general.'"

The viceroy gave a slight start, and smiled. He had not, as yet, accustomed his mind to such bold exercise of his patronage. He lived, however, to get over this sensation.

"My son," resumed Massingbred, "argues this at some length. If you permit, I'll leave the letter in your excellency's hands. In fact, I read it very hurriedly, and came over here the moment I glanced my eyes over this passage."

His excellency took the letter, and turned to address a word to Joe Nelligan, but he had left the spot.

"Belcour," said the viceroy, "tell Mr. Nelligan I wish to speak to him. I shall be in the small drawing-room. I'll talk with him alone. Massingbred, be ready to come when I shall send for you."

The viceroy sat alone by the fire, pondering over all he had heard. There was indeed that to ponder over, even in the brief, vague description of the writer. "The difficulties of Ireland," as it was the fashion of the day to call them, were not such as government commissions discover, or blue books describe; they lay deeper than the legislative lead-line ever reaches—many a fathom down below statutes and Acts of Parliament. They were in the instincts, the natures, the blood of a people who had never acknowledged themselves a conquered nation. Perhaps his excellency lost himself in speculations, mazy and confused enough to addle deeper heads. Perhaps he was puzzled to think how he could bring the Cabinet to see these things, or the importance that pertained to them: who knows? At all events time glided on, and still he was alone. At length the aide-de-camp appeared, and with an air of some confusion said,

"It would appear, my lord, that Mr. Nelligan has gone away."

"Why, he never said good night; he didn't take leave of me!" said the viceroy, smiling.

The aide-de-camp slightly elevated his brows, as though to imply his sense of what it might not have become him to characterise in words.

"Very strange indeed!" repeated his excellency; "isn't it, Belcour?"

"Very strange indeed, your excellency," said the other, bowing.

"There could have been no disrespect in it," said his lordship, good-humouredly; "of *that* I'm quite certain. Send Colonel Massingbred here."

"He's gone off, Massingbred," said the viceroy, as the other appeared.

"So I have just learned, my lord. I conclude he was not aware—that he was unacquainted with ——"

"Oh, of course, Massingbred," broke in the viceroy, laughing, "the fault is all with my predecessors in office; they never invited these men as they ought to have done. Have you sounded M'Casky as to the appointment?"

"Yes, my lord; he thinks 'we might do worse.'"

"A qualified approval, certainly. Perhaps he meant we might select himself!"

"I rather opine, my lord, that he regards Nelligan's promotion as likely to give offence to Mr. O'Connell, unless that he be himself consulted upon it."

"Then comes the question, Who is it governs this country, Colonel Massingbred?" said the marquis, and for the first time a flash of angry meaning darkened his cheeks. "If I be here"—he stopped and hesitated;—"if you and I be here only to ratify appointments made by irresponsible individuals—if we hold the reins of power only to be told where we're to drive to—I must own the office is not very dignified, nor am I patient enough to think it endurable."

"M'Casky only suggested that it might be advisable to see O'Connell on the subject, not, as it were, to pass him over in conferring the appointment."

"I cannot at all concur in this view, Massingbred," said the marquis, proudly; "there could be no such humiliation in the world as a patronage administered in this wise. Write to Nelligan—write to him to-night: say that his abrupt departure alone prevented my making to him personally the offer of the solicitorship; add, that you have my directions to place the office in his hands, and express a strong wish, on your own part, that he may not decline it."

Massingbred bowed in acquiescence, and, after a pause, his excellency went on.

"There would be no objection to your adding something to the effect, that my selection of him was prompted by motives in which party has no share; that his acknowledged eminence at the bar—a character to which even political opponents bear honourable testimony—in fact, Massingbred," added he, impatiently, "if the appointment should come to be questioned in the House, let us have it on record that we made it solely on motives directed to the public service. You understand me?"

"I think so, my lord," said Massingbred, and withdrew.

If it were not that other cares and other interests call us away, we would gladly linger a little longer to speculate on the viceroy's thoughts as he reseated himself by the fire. His brow was overcast and his features clouded. Was it that he felt he had entered the lists, and thrown down the glove to a strong and resolute opponent? Had he before him a vista of the terrible conflict between expediency and honour, that was soon to be his fate? Had he his doubts as to the support his own cabinet would afford him? Was his pride the ruling sentiment of the moment,—or did there enter into his calculations the subtle hope of all the eager expectancy this appointment would create, all the disposable venality it would lay at his discretion? Who can answer these questions? who solve these doubts? Is it not very possible that his mind wandered amidst them all? Is it not more than likely that they passed in review before him, for when he rejoined his company his manner was more absent, his courtesy less easy than usual.

At length Mr. M'Casky came forward to say good night.

"Colonel Massingbred has told you of those disturbances in the west, has he not?" asked the viceroy.

"Yes, my lord," replied the other.

"And what opinion—what advice did you give?"

"To let matters alone, my lord; to be always a little behind time, particularly in sending a force. 'Never despatch the police to quell a riot,' said John Toler, 'unless one of the factions be completely beaten, otherwise you'll have them both on your back;' and I assure your excellency, Ireland has been very successfully governed under that maxim for years past."

"Thank-you, M'Casky; thank you for the advice," said his excellency, laughing, and wished him good night.

CHAPTER LXIII.

AN HONOURED GUEST.

It was a time of unusual stir and bustle at the Martin Arms; the house was crammed with company. Messengers, some mounted, others on foot, came and went at every moment; horses stood ready saddled and harnessed in the stables, in waiting for any emergency; in fact there was a degree of movement and animation only second to that of a contested election. In the midst of this confusion, a chaise with four smoking posters drew up at the door, and a sharp, clear voice called out,

"Morrissy, are my rooms ready?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Repton," stammered out the abashed landlord; "the house is full; there's not a spot in it to put a child in."

"You got my letter, I suppose?" said Repton, angrily.

"I did, sir, but it was too late; the whole house was engaged by Mr. Scanlan, and the same evening the company arrived in two coaches-and-four."

"And who is the precious company you speak of?"

"Mr. Merl, sir," said the other, dropping his voice to a whisper, "the new owner of Cro' Martin; he's here, with two or three great lawyers and one or two of his friends. They came down to serve the notices and give warning——"

"Well, what is to be done? where can I be accommodated?" broke in Repton, hastily. "Isn't Mr. Massingbred in the house?"

"No, sir, he had to move out, too; but, sure enough, he left a bit of a note for you in the bar." And he hastened off at once to fetch it.

Repton broke open the seal impatiently, and read:

"MY DEAR MR. REPTON,

"I regret that you'll find the inn full on your arrival; they turned me out yesterday to make room for Mr. Merl and his followers. Happily, Mr. Nelligan heard of my destitution, and offered me a quarter at his house. He also desires me to say that he will deem it a very great favour if you will accept the shelter of his roof, and in hopeful anticipation of your consenting, he will wait dinner for your arrival. From my own knowledge, I can safely assure you that the offer is made in a spirit of true hospitality, and I sincerely wish that you may accept it.

"Yours very faithfully,
"J. MASSINGBRED."

"Where does Mr. Nelligan live?" asked Repton, as he refolded the letter.

"Just across the street, sir. There it is."

"Set me down there, then," said Repton. And the next moment he was at Nelligan's door.

"This is a very great honour, sir," said old Dan, as he appeared, in a suit of decorous black. "It is indeed a proud day that gives me the pleasure of seeing you here."

"My dear sir, if you had no other distinction than being the father of Joseph Nelligan, the honour and the pride lie all in the opposite scale. I am sincerely glad to be your guest, and to know you, where every true Irishman is seen to the greatest advantage—at the head of his own board."

While Nelligan conducted his guest to his room, he mentioned that Massingbred had ridden over to Cro' Martin early in the morning, but would be certainly back for dinner.

"And what's the news of Miss Martin? Is she better?"

"They say not, sir. The last accounts are far from favourable."

"Sir Henry Laurie saw her, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir; he passed all Sunday here, and only returned to town yesterday. He spoke doubtfully—I might even say, gloomily. He said, however, that we cannot know anything for certain before Friday, or perhaps Saturday."

"It is fever then?"

"Yes, he told my wife, the worst character of typhus."

"Brought on, as I've been told, by exposure to wet and cold on that night at sea. Isn't that the case?"

"I believe so. Mrs. Nelligan went ever the next morning to the cottage. She had heard of poor Mr. Martin's death, and thought she might be of some use to Miss Mary; but when she arrived, it was to find her in fever, talking wildly, and insisting that she must be up and away to Kyle-a-Noe, to look after a poor sick family there."

"Has Mrs. Nelligan seen her since that?"

"She never left her—never quitted her. She relieves Henderson's daughter in watching beside her bed, for the old housekeeper is quite too infirm to bear the fatigue."

"What a sad change has come over this little spot, and in so brief a space too! It seems just like yesterday that I was a guest at Cro' Martin,—poor Martin himself so happy and light-hearted; his dear girl, as he called her, full of life and spirits. Your son was there the night I speak of. I remember it well, for the madcap girls would make a fool of me, and insisted on my singing them a song; and I shall not readily forget the shame my compliance inflicted on my learned brother's face."

"Joe told me of it afterwards."

"Ah, he told you, did he? He doubtless remarked with asperity on the little sense of my own dignity I possessed?"

"On the contrary, sir, he said, 'Great as are Mr. Repton's gifts, and brilliant as are his acquirements, I envy him more the happy buoyancy of his nature than all his other qualities.'"

"He's a fine fellow, and it was a generous speech—not but I will be vain enough to say he was right—ay, sir, perfectly right. Of all the blessings that pertain to temperament, there is not one to compare with the spirit that renews in an old man the racy enjoyment of youth, keeps his heart fresh and his mind hopeful. With these, age brings no terrors. I shall be seventy-five, sir, if I live to the second of next month, and I have not lived long enough to dull the enjoyment life affords me, nor diminish the pleasure my heart derives upon hearing of a noble action or a generous sentiment."

Nelligan gazed at the speaker in mingled astonishment and admiration. Somehow, it was not altogether the man he had expected, but he was far from being disappointed at the difference. The Valentine Repton of his imagination was a crafty pleader, a subtle cross-examiner, an ingenious flatterer of juries; but he was not a man whose nature was assailable by anything "not found in the books."

Now, though Nelligan was himself essentially a worldly man, he was touched by these traits of one whom he had regarded as a hardened old lawyer, distrustful and suspicious.

"Ay, sir," said Repton, as, leaning on the other's arm, he entered the drawing-room—"a wiser man than either of us has left it on record, that after a long life and much experience of the world, he met far more of good and noble qualities in mankind than of their opposite. Take my word for it, whenever we are inclined to the contrary opinion, the fault lies with ourselves."

While they sat awaiting Massingbred's return, a servant entered with a note, which Nelligan having read, handed over to Repton. It was very brief, and ran thus:

"MY DEAR MR. NELLIGAN,

"Forgive my not appearing at dinner, and make my excuses to Mr. Repton, if he be with you, for I have just fallen in with Magennis, who insists on carrying me off to Barnagheela. You can understand, I'm sure, that there are reasons why I could not well decline this invitation. Meanwhile, till to-morrow, at breakfast,

"I am yours,
"JACK MASSINGBRED."

If there was a little constraint on Nelligan's part at finding himself alone to do the honours to his distinguished guest, the feeling soon wore away, and a frank, hearty confidence was soon established between these two men, who, up to the present moment, had been following very different roads in life. Apart from a lurking soreness, the remnants of long-past bitterness, Nelligan's political opinions were fair and moderate, and agreed with Repton's now to a great extent. His views as to the people, their habits and their natures, were also strikingly just and true. He was not over hopeful, nor was he despondent; too acute an observer to refer their faults to any single source, he regarded their complex, intricate characters as the consequence of many causes, the issue of many struggles. There was about all he said the calm judgment of a man desirous of truth, and yet, when he came to speak of the higher classes, the great country gentry, he displayed prejudices and mistakes quite incredible in one of his discernment. The old grudge of social disqualification had eaten deep into his heart, and, as Repton saw, it would take at least two generations of men, well-to-do and successful, to eradicate the sentiment.

Nelligan was quick enough to see that these opinions of his were not shared by his guest, and said, "I cannot expect, Mr. Repton, that you will join me in these views; you have seen these people always as an equal, if not their superior; they met *you* with their best faces and sweetest flatteries. Not so with us. They draw a line, as though to say, go on: make your fortunes—purchase estates—educate your children—send them to the universities with our own—teach them our ways, our instincts, our manners, and yet, at the end of all, you shall remain exactly where you began. You shall never be 'of us.'"

"I am happy to say that I disagree with you," said Repton; "I am a much older man than you, and I can draw, therefore, on a longer experience. Now the change that I myself have seen come over the tone and temper of the world since I was a boy, is far more marvellous to me than all the new-fangled discoveries around us in steam and electricity. Why, sir, the man who now addresses you, born of an ancient stock, as good blood as any untitled gentleman of the land, was treated once as Jack Cade might be in a London drawing-room. The repute of liberal notions or politics at that day stamped you as a democrat and atheist. If you sided with a popular measure, you were deemed capable of all the crimes of a 'Danton.'

"Do I not remember it!—Ay, as a student, young, ardent, and high-hearted, when I was summoned before the visitors of the university, and sternly asked by the dark-browed Lord Chancellor if I belonged to a society called the 'Friends of Ireland,' and on my acknowledging the fact, without inquiry—without examination, deprived of my scholarship, and sent back to my chambers, admonished to be more cautious, and menaced with expulsion. I had very little to live on in those days; my family had suffered great losses in fortune, and I disliked to be a burden to them. I took pupils, therefore, to assist me in my support. The vice-provost stepped in, however, and interdicted this. 'Young men,' he said, 'ran a greater chance of coming out of my hands followers of Paine than disciples of Newton.' I starved on till I was called to the bar. There, fresh insults and mortifications met me. My name on a brief seemed a signal for a field-day against Jacobinism and infidelity. The very bench forgot its dignity in its zeal. I remember well one day, when stung and maddened by these outrages, I so far forgot myself as to reply, and the Court of King's Bench was closed against me for twelve long years—ay, till I came back to it as the first man in my profession. It was a trumpery cause—I forget what—a suit about some petty bill of exchange. I disputed the evidence, and sought to show its invalidity; the Chief Justice stopped me, and said: 'The Court is aware of the point on which you rely; we have known evidence of this nature admitted in cases of trial for treason—cases with which Mr. Repton, we know, is very familiar.' I stopped; my blood boiled with indignation, my temples throbbed to bursting, to be thus singled out amongst my brethren—before the public—as a mark of scorn and reprobation. 'It is true, my lord,' said I, with a slow, measured utterance, 'I am familiar with such cases. Who is there in this unhappy land that is not! I am aware, too, that if I stood in that dock arraigned on such a charge, your lordship would rule that this evidence was admissible; you would charge against me, sentence, and hang me; but the present is an action for eleven pounds ten, and, therefore, I trust to your lordship's lenity and mercy to reject it.'

"That reply, Sir, cost me twelve years of exile from the court wherein I uttered it. Those were times when the browbeating judge could crush the bar; nor were the jury always safe in the sanctuary of the jury-box. Now, such abuses are no longer in existence, and if we have made no other stride in progress, even that is considerable."

"In all that regards the law and its administration, I am sure you are correct, Sir," said Nelligan, submissively.

"At the period I speak of," resumed Repton, who now was only following out his own thoughts and reminiscences, "the judges were little else than prefects, administering the country through the channel of the penal code, and the jury a set of vulgar partisans, who wielded the power of a verdict with all the caprice of a faction; and as to their ignorance, why, Sir, Crookshank, who afterwards sat on the bench, used to tell of a trial for murder at Kells, where the 'murdered man' was two hours under cross-examination on the table! Yes, but that is not all; the jury retired to deliberate, and came out at length with a verdict of 'manslaughter,' as the prisoner was 'a bad fellow, and had once stolen a saddle from the foreman.' You talk of law and civilisation, why, I tell you, Sir, that the barbaric code of the red man is a higher agent of enlightenment than the boasted institutions of England, when thus perverted and degraded. No, no, Mr. Nelligan, it may be a fine theme for declamation, there may be grand descriptive capabilities about the Ireland of sixty or seventy years ago, but be assured, it was a social chaos of the worst kind; and as a maxim, sir, remember, that the inhabitants of a country are never so much to be pitied as when the aspect of their social condition is picturesque!"

Repton fell into a musing fit when he had finished these observations, and Nelligan felt too much deference for his guest to disturb him, and they sat thus silent for some time, when the old lawyer suddenly arousing himself, said,

"What's all this I hear about disturbances, and attacks on the police, down here?"

"There's nothing political in it," rejoined Nelligan. "It was resistance offered by the people, to the service of certain notices on the part of this London Jew,—Merl, I think they call him."

"Yes, that's the name," quickly responded Repton. "You are aware of the circumstances under which he claims the estate?"

"I had it from Brierley, who was told by Scanlan that he purchased, or rather won at play, the entire and sole reversion."

Repton nodded.

"And such is a legal compact, I presume?" said Nelligan.

"If the immoral obligation be well concealed in the negotiation, I don't see how it is to be broken. The law, sir," added he, solemnly, "never undertakes the charge of fools till a commission be taken out in their behalf! This young fellow's pleasure it was to squander his succession to a princely estate, and he chanced to meet with one who could appreciate his intentions."

"Massingbred told me, however, that some arrangement, some compromise was in contemplation; that Merl, knowing that to enforce his claim would subject him to a trial and all its disclosures, had shown a disposition to treat; in fact, Massingbred has already had an interview with him, and but for Scanlan, who desires to push matters to extremity, the affair might possibly be accommodated."

"The Jew possibly sees, too, that an Irish succession is not a bloodless triumph. He has been frightened, I have no doubt."

"I believe so; they say he took to his bed the day he got back here, and has never quitted it since. The people hunted them for four miles across the country, and as Merl couldn't leap his horse over the walls, they were several times nearly caught by the delay in making gaps for him."

"I'd have given fifty pounds to be in at it," broke out Repton. Then suddenly remembering that the aspiration did not sound as very dignified, he hemmed and corrected himself, saying, "It must, indeed, have been a strange spectacle!"

"They started at Kyle's Wood, and ran them over the low grounds beside Kelly's Mills, and then doubling, brought them along the foot of Barnagheela mountain, where, it seems, Magennis joined the chase; he was fast closing with them when his gun burst, and rather damaged his hand."

"He fired, then?"

"Yes, he put a heavy charge of slugs into Merl's horse as he was getting through the mill-race, and the beast flung up and threw his rider into the stream. Scanlan dismounted and gathered him up, discharging his pistol at some country fellow who was rushing forward; they say the man has lost an eye. They got off, however, and gaining the shelter of the Cro' Martin wood, they managed to escape at last, and reached this about six o'clock, their clothes in tatters, their horses lamed, and themselves lamentable objects of fatigue and exhaustion. Since that, no one but the doctor has seen Merl, and Scanlan only goes out with an escort of police."

"All this sounds very like 'sixty years ago,'" said Repton, laughing.

"I'm afraid it does, and I half dread what the English newspapers may say under the heading of 'Galway Barbarities.'"

"By Jove! I must say I like it; that is," said Repton, hesitating and confused, "I can see some palliation for the people in such an outburst of generous but misdirected feeling. The old name has still its spell for their hearts; and even superstitions, sir, are better than incredulity!"

"But of what avail is all this? The law must and will be vindicated. It may cost some lives, on the road, but Mr. Merl must reach his journey's end, at last."

"He may deem the sport, as I have known some men do tiger-hunting, not worth the danger," said Repton. "You and I, Mr. Nelligan, acclimated, as I may say, to such incidents, would probably not decline the title to an estate, whose first step in possession should be enforced by the blunderbuss; but make the scene Africa, and say what extent of territory would you accept of, on the compact of enforching your claim against the natives? Now, for all the purposes of argument, to this cockney's appreciation, these countrymen of ours are Africans."

"I can well understand his terror," said Nelligan, thoughtfully. "I'm sure the yell that followed him through the gap of Kyle-a-Noe will ring in his heart for many a day. It was there the pursuit was hottest. As they came out, a stranger, who had been here during the winter—a Mr. Barry ——"

"What of *him?* What did *he* do?" broke in Repton, with great eagerness.

"He stood upon an old wall, and hurrahed the people on, calling out, 'Five gold guineas to the man who will hurl that fellow into the lake.'"

"He said that?" cried Repton.

"Yes, and waved his hat in encouragement to the mob! This was deposed in evidence before the bench, and Scanlan's affidavit went on to say, that when the temper of the people seemed to relent, and the ardour of their pursuit to relax, this man's presence invariably rallied all the energies of mischief, and excited the wildest passions of the populace."

"Who or what is he supposed to be?" asked the lawyer.

"Some say, a returned convict—a banker that was transported thirty years ago for forgery; others, that he is Con O'Hara, that killed Major Stackpoole in the famous duel at Bunratty Castle. Magennis swears that he remembers the face well; at all events there is a mystery about him, and when he came into the shop below stairs——"

"Oh, then, you have seen him yourself?"

"Yes; he came in on Monday last and asked for some glazed gunpowder, and if we had bullets of a large mould to fit his pistols. They were curiosities in their way; they were made in America, and had a bore large as your thumb."

"You had some conversation with him?"

"A few words about the country and the crops. He said he thought we had good prospects for the wheat, and, if we should have a fine harvest, a good winter was like to follow. Meaning that, with enough to eat, we should have fewer outrages in the dark nights, and by that I knew he was one acquainted with the country. I said as much, and then, he turned fiercely on me, and remarked, 'I never questioned you, sir, about your hides, and tallow, and tenpenny nails, for they were *your* affairs; please, then, to pay the same deference to *me* and *mine*.' And before I could reply he was gone."

"It was a rude speech," said Repton, thoughtfully; "but many men are morose from circumstances, whose natures are full of kindliness and gentleness."

"It was precisely the impression this stranger made upon me. There was that in his manner which implied a hard lot in life—no small share of the shadiest side of fortune; and even when his somewhat coarse rebuke was uttered, I was more disposed to be angry with myself for being the cause, than with him who made it."

"Where is he stopping just now?"

"At Kilkieran, I have heard; but he has been repeatedly back and forward in the town here during the week, though for the last few days I have not seen him. Perhaps he has heard of Scanlan's intention to summons him for aiding and abetting an assault, and has kept out of the way in consequence."

"*He* keep out of the way!" cried Repton; "you never mistook a man more in your life!"

"You are acquainted with him, then?" said Nelligan, in amazement.

"That am I, sir. No one knows him better, and on my knowledge of the man it was that I apologised for his incivility to yourself. If I cannot say more, Mr. Nelligan, it is not because I have any mistrust in your confidence, but that my friend's secret is in his own charge, and only to be revealed at his own pleasure."

"I wish you would tell him that I never meant to play the spy upon him—that my remark was a merely chance observation——"

"I promise you to do so," broke in Repton. "I promise you still more, that before he leaves this you shall have an apology from his own lips for his accidental rudeness; nay, two men that would know how to respect each other should never part under even a passing misunderstanding. It is an old theory of mine, Mr. Nelligan, that good men's good opinions of us form the pleasantest store of our reminiscences, and I'd willingly go a hundred miles to remove a misconception that might bring me back to the esteem of an honourable heart, though I never were to set eyes again on him who possessed it."

"I like your theory well, sir," said Nelligan, cordially.

"You'll find the practice will reward you," said Repton.

"I confess this stranger has inspired me with great curiosity."

"I can well understand the feeling," said Repton, musing. "It is with men as with certain spots in landscape, there are chance glimpses which suggest to us the fair scenes that lie beyond our view! Poor fellow! poor fellow!" muttered he once or twice to himself; and then starting abruptly, said, "You have made me so cordially welcome here, that I am going to profit by every privilege of a guest. I'm going to say good night, for I have much before me on the morrow."

CHAPTER LXIV.

HOW DIPLOMACY FAILED.

Repton was up at daybreak, and at his desk. Immense folios littered the table, and even the floor around him, and the old lawyer sat amidst a chaos that it was difficult to believe was only the growth of an hour or two. All the intentness of his occupation, however, did not prevent him hearing a well-known voice in the little stable-yard beneath his window, and opening the sash he called out, "Massingbred, is that you?"

"Ah, Mr. Repton, are you stirring so early? I had not expected to see you for at least two hours to come. May I join you?"

"By all means; at once," was the answer. And the next moment they were together. "Where's Barry? When did you see him last?" was Repton's first question.

"For a moment, on Tuesday last; he came up here to learn if you had arrived, or when you might be expected. He seemed disappointed when I said not before the latter end of the week, and muttered something about being too late. He seemed flurried and excited. I heard afterwards that he had been somehow mixed up with that tumultuous assemblage that resisted the police, and I offered to go back with him to Kilkieran, but he stopped me short, saying, 'I am not at Kilkieran;' and so abruptly, as to show that my proposal was not acceptable. He then sat down and wrote a short letter, which he desired me to give you on arriving; but to deliver it with my own hand, as, if any reply were necessary, I should be ready to carry it to him. This is the letter."

Repton read it rapidly, and then walking to the window, stood pondering over the contents.

"You know this man Merl, don't you, Massingbred?" asked Repton.

"Yes, thoroughly."

"The object of this letter is to try one last chance for an arrangement. Barry suspects that the Jew's ambition for Irish proprietorship may have been somewhat dashed by the experience of the last few days; that he will be likely enough to weigh the advantages and disadvantages with a juster appreciation, and if he had never come here, and, if such be the case, we are ready to meet with a fair and equitable offer. We'll repay him all that he advanced in cash to young Martin, and all that he won from him at play, if he surrender his reversionary claim. We'll ask no questions as to how this loan was made, or how that debt incurred. It shall be the briefest of all transactions; a sum in simple addition, and a cheque for the total."

"He'll refuse — flatly refuse it," said Massingbred. "The very offer will restore any confidence the last few days may have shaken; he'll judge the matter like the shares of a stock that are quoted higher in the market."

"You think so?"

"I'm sure of it. I'm ashamed to say, Mr. Repton, that my knowledge of the Herman Merl class may be greater than yours. It is the one solitary point in the realm of information wherein I am probably your superior."

"There are others, and of a very different order, in which I would own you the master," said Repton. "But to our case. Suppose—a mere supposition if you like—but suppose that it could be demonstrated to Mr. Merl that his claim will be not only resisted, but defeated; that the right on which he relies is valueless—the deed not worth the stamps it bears; that this offer is made to avoid a publicity and exposure, far more injurious to him than to those who now shrink from it. What think you then?"

"Simply that he'd not believe it! He'd say, and many others would say, 'If the right lay so incontestably with these others, they'd not give some twenty thousand pounds to compromise what they could enforce for the mere cost of a trial.'"

"Mr. Massingbred, too, would perhaps take the same view of the transaction," said Repton, half tartly.

"Not if Mr. Repton assured me that he backed the opposite opinion," said Jack, politely.

"I thank you heartily for that speech," said the old man, as he grasped the other's hand cordially; "you deserve, and shall have my fullest confidence."

"May I ask," said Jack, "if this offer to buy off Merl be made in the interest of the Martins, for otherwise I really see no great object, so far as they are concerned, in the change of mastery?"

"You'll have to take *my* word for that," said Repton, "or rather, to take the part I assume in this transaction as the evidence of it; and now, as I see that you are satisfied, will you accept of the duty of this negotiation? Will you see and speak with Merl? Urge upon him all the arguments your own ingenuity will furnish, and when you come, if you should be so driven, to the coercive category, and that you want the siege artillery, then send for *me*. Depend upon it, it will be no 'brutum fulmen' that I'll bring up; nor will I, as Pelham said, fire with 'government powder.' My cannon shall be inscribed, like those of the old volunteers, independence or——"

At any other moment Jack might have smiled at the haughty air and martial stride of the old man, as, stimulated by his words, he paced the room; but there was a sincerity and a resolution about him that offered no scope for ridicule. His very features wore a look of intrepidity that bespoke the courage that animated him.

"Now, Massingbred," said he, laying his hand on the young man's arm, "it is only because I am not free to tell another man's secret that I do not at once place you fully in possession of all I myself know of this transaction; but rely on it, you shall be informed on every point, and immediately after the issue of this negotiation with Merl, whatever be the result, you shall stand on the same footing with myself."

"You cannot suppose that I exact this confidence?" began Jack.

"I only know it is your due, sir," said Repton. "Go now—it is not too early; see this man, and let the meeting be of the briefest, for if I were to tell you my own mind, I'd say I'd rather he should reject our offer."

"You are, I own, a little incomprehensible this morning," said Massingbred, "but I am determined to yield you a blind obedience; and so I'm off."

"I'll wait breakfast for you," said Repton, as he reseated himself to his work.

Repton requested Mr. Nelligan's permission to have his breakfast served in his own room, and sat for a long time impatiently awaiting Massingbred's return. He was at one time aroused by a noise below stairs, but it was not the announcement of him he looked for; and he walked anxiously to and fro in his chamber, each moment adding to the uneasiness that he felt.

"Who was it that arrived half an hour ago?" asked he of the servant.

"Mr. Joe, sir, the counsellor, has just come from Dublin, and is at breakfast with the master."

"Ah! he's come, is he? So much the better," muttered Repton, "we may want his calm, clear head to assist us here; not that we shall have to fear a contest—there is no enemy in the field—and if there were, Val Repton is ready to meet him!" And the old man crossed his arms, and stood erect, in all the consciousness of his undiminished vigour. "Here he comes at last—I know his step on the stair." And he flung open the door for Massingbred.

"I read failure in your flushed cheek, Massingbred; failure and anger both, eh?"

Massingbred tried to smile. If there was any quality on which he especially prided himself, it was the bland semblance of equanimity he could assume in circumstances of difficulty and irritation. It was his boast to be able to hide his most intense emotions at moments of passion, and there was a period in which, indeed, he wielded this acquirement. Of later times, however, he had grown more natural and impulsive; he had not yet lost the sense of pain this yielding occasioned, and it was with evident irritation that he found Repton had read his thoughts.

"You perceive, then, that I am unsuccessful?" said he, with a faint smile. "So much the better if my face betrays me; it will save a world of explanation!"

"Make your report, sir, and I'll make the tea," said Repton, as he proceeded to that office.

"The fellow was in bed—he refused to see me, and it was only by some insistance that I succeeded in gaining admittance. He has had leeches to his temples. He was bruised, it seems, when he fell, but far more frightened than hurt. He looks the very picture of terror, and lies with a perfect armoury of pistols beside his bed. Scanlan was there, and thought to remain during our interview, but I insisted on his withdrawing, and he went. The amiable attorney, somehow, has a kind of respect for me that is rather amusing. As for Merl, he broke out into a vulgar tirade of passion, abused the country and the people, cursed the hour he came amongst them, and said, if he only knew the nature of the property before he made his investment, he'd rather have purchased Guatemala bonds, or Santa Fé securities.

"'Then I have come fortunately,' said I, 'for I bring you an offer to reimburse all your outlay, and to rid you of a charge so little to your inclination.'

"'Oh! you do, do you?' said he, with one of his cunningest leers. 'You may not be able, perhaps, to effect that bargain, though. It's one thing to pay down a smart sum of money and wait your time for recovering it, and it's another to surrender your compact when the hour of acquisition has arrived. I bought this reversion—at least, I paid the first instalment of the price—four years ago, when the late man's life was worth twenty years' purchase. Well, he's gone now, and do you think that I'm going to give up my claim, for what it cost me?'

"I gently insinuated that the investigation of the claim might lead to unpleasant revelations. There were various incidents of the play-table, feasible and successful enough after a supper with champagne, and in the short hours before day, which came off with an ill-grace on the table of a court of justice, with three barons of the exchequer to witness them. That I myself might prove an awkward evidence, if unhappily cited to appear; that of my own knowledge I could mention three young fellows of good fortune who had been drained to their last shilling in his company. In fact, we were both remarkably candid with each other, and while *I* reminded *him* of some dark passages at écarté, *he* brought to *my* memory certain protested bills and dishonoured notes that 'non jucundum esset meminisse." I must say, for both of us, we did the thing well, and in good breeding; we told and listened to our several shortcomings with a temper that might have graced a better cause, and I defy the world to produce two men who could have exchanged the epithets of swindler and scamp with more thorough calm and good manners. Unhappily, however, high as one rises in his own esteem by such contests, he scarcely makes the same ascent in that of his neighbour, and so we came, in our overflowing frankness, to admit to each other more of our respective opinions than amounts to flattery. I believe, and, indeed, I hope, I should have maintained my temper to the end, had not the fellow pretty broadly insinuated that some motive of personal advantage had prompted my interference, and actually pushed his insolence so far as to insinuate that 'I should make a better thing' by adhering to his fortunes."

Repton started at these words, and Massingbred resumed: "True, upon my honour; I exaggerate nothing. It was a gross outrage, and very difficult to put up with, so I just expressed my sincere regret, that instead of being in bed he was not up and stirring, inasmuch as I should have tried what change of air might have done for him, by pitching him out of the window. He tugged violently at the bell-rope, as though I were about to execute my menace, and so, I left him. My diplomacy has, therefore, been a sad failure. I only hope that I may not have increased the difficulty of the case by my treatment of it."

"You never thought of *me* at all, then?" asked Repton.

"Never, till I was once more in the street; then, I remembered something of what you said about coercive means. but of what avail a mere menace? This fellow is not new to such transactions—he has gone through all the phases of 'bulleydom.' Besides, there is a dash of Shylock in every Jew that ever breathed. They will 'have their bond,' unless it can be distinctly proved to them that the thing is impossible."

"Now then for our breaching battery," said Repton, rising and pacing the room. "This attempt at a compromise never had any favour in my eyes; Barry wished it, and I yielded. Now, for a very different course. Can you find a saddle-horse here? Well, then, be ready to set out in half an hour, and search out Barry for me. He'll be found at Kilkieran, or the neighbourhood: say we must meet at once; arrange time and place for the conference, and come back to me."

Repton issued his directions with an air of command, and Massingbred prepared as implicitly to obey them.

"Mr. Nelligan has lent me his own pad," said Massingbred, entering soon after, "and his son will accompany me, so that I am at your orders at once."

"There are your despatches," said Repton," giving him a sealed packet. "Let me see you here as soon as may be."

CHAPTER LXV.

A GREAT DISCOVERY.

About an hour after Massingbred's departure for Kilkieran, Mr. Repton set out for Cro' Martin Castle. The inn had furnished him its best chaise and four of its primest horses; and had the old lawyer been disposed to enjoy the pleasure which a great moralist has rated so highly, of rapid motion through the air, he might have been gratified on that occasion. Unhappily, however, he was not so minded. Many and very serious cares pressed upon him. He was travelling a road, too, which he had so often journeyed in high spirits, fancying to himself the pleasant welcome before him, and even rehearsing to his own mind the stores of agreeability he was to display—and now, it was to a deserted mansion, lonely and desolate, he was turning! Death and ruin both had done their work on that ancient family, whose very name in the land seemed already hastening to oblivion!

Few men could resist the influence of depression better than Repton. It was not alone that his temperament was still buoyant and energetic, but the habits of his profession had taught him the necessity of being prepared for emergencies, and he would have felt it a dereliction of duty were his sentiments to overmaster his power of action.

Still, as he went along, the well-known features of the spot would recall memories of the past. There, lay a dense wood, of which he remembered the very day, the very hour, poor Martin had commenced the planting. There, was the little trout-stream, where, under pretence of fishing, he had lounged along the summer day, with Horace for his companion; that, the school-house Mary had sketched, and built out of her own pocket-money. And now the great massive gates slowly opened, and they were within the demesne,—all silent and noiseless. As they came in sight of the Castle, Repton covered his face with his hands, and sat for some minutes thus. Then, as if mastering his emotion, he raised his head and folded his arms on his chest.

"You are true to time, I perceive, Dr. Leslie," said he, as the chaise stopped at the door, and the venerable clergyman came forward to greet him.

"I got your note last night, sir, but I determined not to keep you waiting, for I perceive you say that time is precious now."

"I thank you heartily," said Repton, as he shook the other's hand. "I am grateful to you also for being here to meet me, for I begin to feel my courage fail me as to crossing that threshold again!"

"Age has its penalties as well as its blessings, sir," said Leslie, "and amongst these, is to outlive those dear to us!" There was a painful significance to his own desolate condition that made these words doubly impressive.

Repton made no reply, but pulled the bell strongly, and the loud, deep sounds rung out clearly through the silent house. After a brief interval, a small window above the door was opened, and a man with a blunderbuss in his hand sternly demanded their business.

"Oh, I ax pardon, sir," said he, as suddenly correcting himself. "I thought it was that man that's come to take the place—'the Jew,' they call him—and Mr. Magennis said I wasn't to let him in, or one belonging to him."

"No, Barney, we are not his friends," said Dr. Leslie; "this is Mr. Repton."

"Sure I know the counsellor well, sir," said Barney. "I'll be down in a minute and open the door."

"I must go to work at once," said Repton, in a low and somewhat broken voice, "or this place will be too much for me. Every step I go is calling up old times and old scenes. I had thought my heart was of sterner stuff. Isn't this the way to the library? No, not that way—that was poor Martin's own breakfast-room!" He spoke hurriedly, like one who wished to suppress emotion by very activity of thought.

While the man who conducted them opened the window-shutters and the windows, Repton and his companion sat down without speaking. At last he withdrew, and Repton, rising, said,

"Some of the happiest hours of my life were passed in this same room. I used to come up here after the fatigues of circuit, and, throwing myself into one of those easy chairs, dream away for a day or two, gazing out on that bold mountain yonder, above the trees, and wondering how those fellows who never relaxed, in this wise, could sustain the wear and tear of life; for, that junketting to Harrowgate—that rattling, noisy steam-boating up the Rhine—that Cockney heroism of Swiss travel, is my aversion. The calm forenoon for thought, the pleasant dinner-table for genial enjoyment, afterwards—these are true recreations. And what evenings we have had here! But I must not dwell on these." And now he threw upon the table a mass of papers and letters, amongst which he sought out one, from which he took a small key. "Dr. Leslie," said he, "you might have been assured that I have not called upon you to meet me to-day without a sufficient reason. I know that, from certain causes, of which I am not well informed, you were not on terms of much intimacy with my poor friend here. This is not a time to think of these things; *you*, I am well assured, will never remember them."

Leslie made a motion of assent, and the other went on, his voice gradually gaining in strength and fulness, and his whole manner by degrees assuming the characteristic of the lawyer.

"To the few questions to which I will ask your answers, now, I have to request all your attention. They are of great importance; they may, very probably, be re-asked of you under more solemn circumstances; and I have to bespeak, not alone, all your accuracy for the replies, but that you may be able, if asked, to state the manner and even the words in which I now address you.—You have been the incumbent of this parish for a length of time—What number of years?"

"Sixty-three. I was appointed to the vicarage on my ordination, and never held any other charge."

"You knew the late Darcy Martin, father of the last proprietor of this estate?"

"Intimately."

"You baptised his two children, born at the same birth State what you remember of the circumstance."

"I was sent for to the Castle to give a private baptism to the two infants, and requesting that I would bring the vestry-book along with me for the registration. I did so. The children were accordingly christened, and their births duly registered and witnessed."

"Can you remember the names by which they were called?"

"Not from the incident in question, though I know the names from subsequent knowledge of them, as they grew up to manhood."

"What means, if any, were adopted at the time to distinguish the priority of birth?"

"The eldest was first baptised, and his birth specially entered in the vestry-book as such; all the witnesses who signed the entry corroborating the fact by special mention of it under their signature. We also heard that the child wore a gold bracelet on one arm; but I did not remark it."

"You have this vestry-book in your keeping?"

"No; Mr. Martin retained it, with some object of more formal registration. I repeatedly asked for it, but never could obtain it. At length some coolness grew up between us, and I could not, or did not wish to press my demand, and at last it lapsed entirely from my memory, so that from that day I never saw it."

"You could, however, recognise it, and be able to verify your signature?"

"Certainly."

"Was there, so far as you could see, any marked distinction made between the children while yet young?"

"I can remember, that at the age of three or four, the eldest boy wore a piece of red or blue ribbon on his sleeve; but any other mark I never observed. They were treated, so far as I could perceive, precisely alike; and their resemblance to each other was then so striking, it would have been a matter of great nicety to distinguish them. Even at school, I am told, mistakes constantly occurred, and one boy once received the punishment incurred by the other."

"As they grew up, you came to recognise the eldest by his name?"

"Yes. Old Mr. Darcy Martin used to take the elder boy more about with him. He was then a child of ten or eleven years old. He was particular in calling attention to him, saying, 'This fellow is to be my heir; he'll be the Martin of Cro' Martin yet.'"

"And what name did the boy bear?"

"Godfrey—Godfrey Martin. The second boy's name was Barry."

"You are sure of this?"

"Quite sure. I have dined a number of times at the Castle, when Godfrey was called in after dinner, and the other boy was generally in disgrace; and I could remark that his father spok of him in a tone of irritation and bitterness, which he did employ towards the other."

"Mr. Martin died before his sons came of age?"

"Yes; they were only nineteen at his death."

"He made a will, I believe, to which you were a witness?"

"I was; but somehow the will was lost or mislaid, and it was only by a letter to the Honourable Colonel Forbes, of Lisvally, that Martin's intentions about appointing him guardian to his elder boy were ascertained. I myself was named guardian to the second son, an office of which he soon relieved me by going abroad, and never returned for a number of years."

"Godfrey Martin then succeeded to the estate in due course?"

"Yes, and we were very intimate for a time, till after his marriage, when estrangement grew up between us, and at last we ceased to visit at all."

"Were the brothers supposed to be on good terms with each other?"

"I have heard two opposite versions on that subject. My own impression was that Lady Dorothea disliked Barry Martin, who had made a marriage that was considered beneath him, and then his brother was, from easiness of disposition, gradually weaned of his old affection for him. Many thought Barry, with all his faults, the better-hearted of the two."

"Can you tell what ultimately became of this Barry Martin?"

"I only know, from common report, that after the death of his wife, having given his infant child, a girl, in charge to his brother, he engaged in the service of some of the Southern American Republics, and is supposed yet to be living there, some say in great affluence, others, that he is utterly ruined by a failure in a mining speculation. The last time I ever heard Godfrey speak of him was in terms of sincere affection, adding the words, 'Poor Barry will befriend every one but himself.'"

"So that he never returned?"

"I believe not; at least I never heard of it."

"I have written down these questions and your answers to them," said Repton, "will you read them over, and if you find them correct, append your signature. I am expecting Mr. Nelligan here, and I'll go and see if there be any sign of his arrival."

Repton just reached the door as Mr. Nelligan drove up to it.

"All goes on well and promptly to-day," said the old lawyer.

"I have got through a good deal of business already, and I expect to do as much more ere evening sets in. I have asked you to be present, as a magistrate, while I examine the contents of a certain closet in this house. I am led to believe that very important documents are deposited there, and it is in your presence, and that of Mr. Leslie, I purpose to make the inquiry. Before I do so, however, I will entreat your attention to a number of questions, and the answers to them, which will be read out to you. You will then be in a better position to judge of any discovery which the present investigation may reveal. All this sounds enigmatically enough, Mr. Nelligan, but you will extend your patience to me for a short while, and I hope to repay it."

Nelligan bowed in silence, and followed him into the house.

"There," said Mr. Leslie, "I have written my name to that paper; it is, so far as I can see, perfectly correct."

"Now, let me read it for Mr. Nelligan," said Repton; and, without further preface, recited aloud the contents of the document. "I conclude, sir," said he, as he finished, "that there is nothing in what you have just heard very new or very strange to your ears. You knew before that Darcy Martin had two sons; that they were twins; and that one of them, Godfrey, inherited the estate. You may also have heard something of the brother's history; more, mayhap, than is here alluded to."

"I have always heard him spoken of as a wild, reckless fellow, and that it was a piece of special good fortune he was not born to the property, or he had squandered every shilling of it," said Nelligan.

"Yes," said Leslie, "such was the character he bore."

"That will do," said Repton, rising. "Now, gentlemen, I'm about to unlock this cabinet, and, if I be correctly informed, we shall find the vestry-book with the entries spoken of by Mr. Leslie, and the long missing will of Darcy Martin. Such, I repeat, are the objects I expect to discover; and it is in your presence I proceed to this examination."

In some astonishment at his words, the others followed him to the corner of the room, where, half concealed in the wainscot, a small door was at length discovered, unlocking which, Repton and the others entered a little chamber, lighted by a narrow, loopholed window. Not stopping to examine the shelves, loaded with old documents and account-books, Repton walked straight to a small ebony cabinet, on a bracket, opening which, he drew forth a square vellum-bound book, with massive silver clasps.

"The old vestry-book. I know it well," said Leslie.

"Here are the documents in parchment," continued Repton, "and a sealed paper. What are the lines in the corner, Mr. Nelligan, your eyes are better than mine?"

"'Agreement between Godfrey and Barry Martin. To be opened by whichever shall survive the other.' The initials of each are underneath."

"With this we have no concern," said Repton; "our business lies with these." And he pointed to the vestry-book. "Let us look for the entry you spoke of."

"It is easily found," said Leslie. "It was the last ever made in that book. Here it is." And he read aloud: "'February 8th, 1772. Privately baptised, at Cro' Martin Castle, by me, Henry Leslie, Incumbent and Vicar of the said parish, Barry and Godfrey, sons of Darcy Martin and Eleanor his wife, both born on the fourth day of the aforesaid month; and, for the better discrimination of their priority in age, it is hereby added that Barry Martin is the elder, and Godfrey the second son, to which fact the following are attesting witnesses: Michael Keirn, house-steward, George Dorcas, butler, and Catherine Broon, maid of still-room.'"

"Is that in your handwriting, sir?" asked Repton.

"Yes, every word of it, except the superscription of the witnesses."

"Why then it would appear that the eldest son never enjoyed his rights," cried Nelligan. "Is that possible?"

"It is the strict truth, sir," said Repton. "The whole history of the case adds one to the thousand instances of the miserable failures men make who seek by the indulgence of their own caprices to obstruct the decrees of Providence. Darcy Martin died in the belief that he had so succeeded, and here now, after more than half a century, are the evidences which reverse his whole policy, and subvert all his plans."

"But what could have been the object here?" asked Nelligan.

"Simply his preference for the younger-born. No sooner had the children arrived at that time of life when dispositions display themselves, than he singled out Godfrey as his favourite. He distinguished him in every way, and as markedly showed that he felt little affection for the other. Whether this favouritism, so openly expressed, had its influence on the rest of the household, or that really they grew to believe that the boy thus selected for peculiar honour was the heir, it would be very difficult now to say. Each cause may have contributed its share; all we know is, that when sent to Doctor Harley's school, at Oughterard, Godfrey was called the elder, and distinguished as such by a bit of red ribbon in his button-hole. And thus they grew up to youth and manhood; the one, flattered, indulged, and caressed, the other, equally depreciated and undervalued. Men are, in a great measure, what others make them. Godfrey became proud, indolent, and overbearing; Barry, reckless and a spendthrift. Darcy Martin died, and Godfrey succeeded him as matter of course, while Barry, disposing of the small property bequeathed to him, set out to seek adventures in the Spanish Main.

"I am not able to tell, had you even the patience to hear, of what befel him there; the very strangest, wildest incidents are recorded of his life, but they have no bearing on what we are now engaged in. He came back, however, with a wife, to find his brother also married. This is a period of his life of which little is known. The brothers did not live well together; there were serious differences between them, and Lady Dorothea's conduct towards her sister-in-law, needlessly cruel and offensive, as I have heard, embittered the relations between them. At last Barry's wife died, it was said, of a broken heart, and Barry arrived at Cro' Martin to deposit his infant child with his brother, and take leave of home and country for ever.

"Some incident of more than usual importance, and with circumstances of no common pain, must now have occurred, for one night Barry left the Castle, vowing never more to enter it. Godfrey followed, and tried to detain him. A scene ensued of entreaty on one side, and passionate vehemence on the other, which brought some of the servants to the spot. Godfrey imperiously ordered them away; they all obeyed but Catty. Catty Broon followed Barry, and never quitted him that night, which he spent walking up and down the long avenue of the demesne, watching and waiting for daybreak. We can only conjecture what, in the violence of her grief and indignation, this old attached follower of the house might have revealed. Barry had always been her favourite of the two boys; she knew his rights—she had never forgotten them. She could not tell by what subtleties of law they had been transferred to another, but she felt in her heart assured that, in the sight of

God, they were sacred. How far, then, she revealed this to him, or only hinted it, we have no means of knowing. We can only say that, armed with a certain fact, Barry demanded the next day a formal meeting with his brother and his sister-in-law Of what passed then and there, no record remains, save, possibly, in that sealed packet, for it bears the date of that eventful morning. I, however, am in a position to prove that Barry declared he would not disturb the possession Godfrey was then enjoying. 'Make that poor child,' said he, alluding to his little girl, 'your own daughter, and it matters little what becomes of *me*.' Godfrey has more than once adverted to this distressing scene to me. He told me how Lady Dorothea's passion was such that she alternately inveighed against himself for having betrayed her into a marriage beneath her, and abjectly implored Barry not to expose them to the shame and disgrace of the whole world by the assertion of his claim. From this she would burst out into fits of open defiance of him, daring him as an impostor; in fact, Martin said, 'That morning has darkened my life for ever; the shadow of it will be over me to the last hour I live!' And so it was! Self-reproach never left him; at one time, for his usurpation of what never was his; at another, for the neglect of poor Mary, who was suffered to grow up without any care of her education, or, indeed, of any attention whatever bestowed upon her.

"I believe that, in spite of herself, Lady Dorothea visited the dislike she bore Barry on his daughter. It was a sense of hate from the consciousness of a wrong—one of the bitterest sources of enmity! At all events, she showed her little affection —no tenderness. Poor Godfrey did all that his weak and yielding nature would permit to repair this injustice; his consciousness that to that girl's father he owed position, fortune, station, everything, was ever rising up in his mind, and urging him to some generous effort in her behalf. But you knew him; you knew how a fatal indolence, a shrinking horror of whatever demanded action or energy overcame all his better nature, and made him as useless to all the exigencies of life as one whose heart was eaten up by selfishness.

"The remainder of this sad story is told in very few words. Barry Martin, from whom for several years before no tidings had been received, came suddenly back to England. At first it had not been his intention to revisit Ireland. There was something of magnanimity in the resolve to stay away: he would not come back to impose upon his brother a renewal of that lease of gratitude he derived from him; he would rather spare him the inevitable conflict of feeling which the contrast of his own affluence with the humble condition of an exile would evoke. Besides, he was one of those men whom, whatever Nature may have disposed them to be, the world has so crushed and hardened that they live rather to indulge strong resentments and stern duties, than to gratify warm affections. Something he had accidentally heard in a coffee-room—the chance mention by a traveller recently returned from Ireland—about a young lady of rank and fortune whom he had met hunting her own harriers alone in the wildest glen of Connemara, decided him to go over there, and, under the name of Mr. Barry, to visit the scenes of his youth.

"I have but to tell you that it was in that dreary month of November, when plague and famine came together upon us, that he saw this country; the people dying on every side, the land untilled, the very crops in some places uncut, terror and dismay on every side, and they who alone could have inspired confidence, or afforded aid, gone! Even Cro' Martin was deserted—worse than deserted—for one was left to struggle alone against difficulties that the boldest and the bravest might have shrunk from. Had Barry Martin been like any other man, he would at once have placed himself at her side. It was a glorious occasion to have shown her that she was not the lone and friendless orphan, but the loved and cherished child of a doting father. But the hard, stern nature of the man had other and very different impulses; and though he tracked her from cottage to cottage, followed her in her lonely rambles, and watched her in her daily duties, no impulse of affection ever moved him to call her his daughter and bring her home to his heart. I know not whether it was to afford him these occasions of meeting her, or really in a spirit of benevolence, but he dispensed large sums in acts of charity among the people, and Mary herself recounted to me, with tears of delight in her eyes, the splendid generosity of this unknown stranger. I must hasten on. An accident, the mere circumstance of a note-book dropped by some strange chance in Barry's room, revealed to him the whole story of Captain Martin's spendthrift life; he saw that this young man had squandered away not only immense sums obtained by loans, but actually bartered his own reversionary right to the entire estate for money already lost at the gaming-table.

"Barry at once set out for Dublin to call upon me and declare himself, but I was, unfortunately, absent at the assizes. He endeavoured next to see Scanlan. Scanlan was in London: he followed him there. To Scanlan he represented himself as a money-lender, who, having come to the knowledge of Merl's dealings with young Martin, and the perilous condition of the property in consequence, offered his aid to re-purchase the reversion while it was yet time. To effect this bargain, Scanlan hastened over to Baden, accompanied by Barry, who, however, for secrecy sake, remained at a town in the neighbourhood. Scanlan, it seems, resolved to profit by an emergency so full of moment, and exacted from Lady Dorothea—for Martin was then too ill to be consulted—the most advantageous terms for himself. I need but mention one of the conditions—a formal consent to his marriage with Miss Martin! and this, remember, when that young lady had not the slightest, vaguest suspicion that such an indignity could be offered her, far less concurred in by her nearest relatives! In the exuberance of his triumph, Scanlan showed the formal letter of assent from Lady Dorothea, to Barry. It was from this latter I had the account, and I can give you no details, for all he said was, 'As I crushed it in my hand, I clenched my fist to fell him to the ground! but I refrained. I muttered a word or two, and got out into the street. I know very little more.'

"That night he set out for Baden, but of his journey I know nothing. The only hint of it he ever dropped was when, giving me this key, he said, 'I saw Godfrey.'

"He is now back here once more; come to insist upon his long unasserted rights, and by a title so indisputable that it will leave no doubt of the result.

"He is silent and uncommunicative; but he has said enough to show me that he is possessed of evidence of the compact between Godfrey and himself, nor is he the man to fail for lack of energy.

"I have now come to the end of this strange history, in which it is not impossible you yourselves may be called to play a part, in confirmation of what you have seen this day."

"Then this was the same Mr. Barry of whom we spoke last night?" said Nelligan, thoughtfully. "When about to describe him to you, I was really going to say, something like what Mr. Martin might look, if ten years older and white haired."

"There is a strong resemblance still!" said Repton, as he busied himself sealing up the vestry-book and the other documents. "These I mean to deposit in your keeping, Mr.

Nelligan, till they be called for. I have sent over Massingbred to Barry to learn what his wishes may be as to the next legal steps; and now, I am ready to return with you to Oughterard."

Talking over this singular story they reached the town, where Massingbred had just arrived a short time before.

"I have had a long chase," said Jack, "and only found him late in the afternoon at the cottage."

"You gave him the packet, then, and asked when we should meet?" asked Repton, hurriedly.

"Yes; he was walking up and down before the door with the doctor, when we rode up; he scarcely noticed us, and taking your letter in his hand he placed it, without breaking the seal, on a seat in the porch. I then gave him your message, and he seemed so lost in thought that I fancied he had not attended to me. I was about to repeat it, when he interrupted me, saying, 'I have heard you, sir; there is no answer.' As I stood for a moment or two, uncertain what to do or say, I perceived that Joe Nelligan, who had been speaking to the doctor, had just staggered towards a bench, ill and fainting. 'Yes,' said Barry, turning his eyes towards him, 'she is very—very ill; tell Repton so, and he'll feel for me!'"

Repton pressed his handkerchief to his face and turned away.

"I'm afraid," said Massingbred, "that her state is highly dangerous. The few words the doctor dropped were full of serious meaning."

"Let us hope, and pray," said Repton, fervently, "that amidst all the calamities of this sorrow-struck land, it may be spared the loss of one who never opened a cabin-door without a blessing, nor closed it but to shut a hope within."

CHAPTER LXVI.

A DARK DAY.

A MILD, soft day, with low-lying clouds, and rich odours of wild flowers rising from the ground, a certain dreamy quiet pervading earth, and sky, and sea, over which faint shadows lingered lazily; some drops of the night dew still glittered on the feathery larches, and bluebells hung down their heads, heavy with moisture, so still the scene that the plash of the leaping trout could be heard as he rose in the dark stream. And yet there was a vast multitude of people there. The whole surface of the lawn that sloped from the cottage to the river was densely crowded, with every age, from the oldest to very infancy, with all conditions, from the well-clad peasant to the humblest "tramper" of the high roads. Weariness, exhaustion, and even hunger were depicted on many of their faces. Some had passed the night there, others had come long distances, faint and footsore; but as they sat, stood, or lay in groups around, not a murmur, not a whisper escaped them; with aching eyes they looked towards an open window, where the muslin curtain was gently stirred in the faint air.

The tidings of Mary Martin's illness had spread rapidly: far-away glens down the coast, lonely cabins on the bleak mountains, wild remote spots out of human intercourse had heard the news, and their dwellers had travelled many a mile to satisfy their aching hearts.

From a late hour of the evening before they had learnt nothing of her state; then, a few words whispered by old Catty to those nearest the door told "that she was no better—if anything, weaker!" These sad tidings were soon passed from lip to lip, and thus they spent the night, praying, or watching wearily, their steadfast gaze directed towards that spot where the object of all their fears and hopes lay suffering.

Of those there, there was scarcely one to whom she was not endeared by some personal benefit. She had aided this one in distress, the other she had nursed in fever; here, were the old she had comforted and cheered; there, the children she had taught and trained beside her chair. Her gentle voice yet vibrated in every heart, her ways of kindness were in every memory. Sickness and sorrow were familiar enough to themselves. Life was, at least to most of them, one long struggle; but they could not bring themselves to think of *her* thus stricken down! She! that seemed an angel, as much above the casualties of such fortune as theirs, as she was their superior in station, that *she* should be sick and suffering, was too terrible to think of.

There was a stir and movement in the multitude, a wavy, surging motion, for the doctor was seen to issue from the stable-yard, and lead his pony towards the bridge. He stopped to say a word or two as he went. They were sad words! and many a sobbing voice, and many a tearful eye told what his tidings had been. "Sinking—sinking rapidly!"

A faint low cry burst from one in the crowd at this moment, and the rumour ran that a woman had fainted. It was poor Joan, who had come that night over the mountain, and overcome by grief and exhaustion together, had at last given way.

"Get a glass of wine for her, or even a cup of water," cried out three or four voices; and one nigh the door entered the cottage in search of aid. The moment after a tall and handsome girl forced her way through the crowd, and gave directions that Joan might be carried into the house.

"Why did ye call her my lady?" muttered an old hag to one of the men near her; "sure she's Henderson's daughter!"

"Is she, faith? By my conscience, then, she might be a better man's! She's as fine a crayture as ever I seen!"

"If she has a purty face, she has a proud heart!" muttered another.

"Ayeh! she'll never be like *her* that's going to leave us!" sighed a young woman with a black ribbon in her cap.

Meanwhile Kate had Joan assisted into the cottage, and was busily occupied in restoring her. Slowly, and with difficulty, the poor creature came to herself, and gazing wildly around, asked where she was; then suddenly bursting out in tears, she said—

"Sure, I know well where I am; sure its my own self brought grief and sorrow under this roof. But for *me*, she'd be well and hearty this day!"'

"Let us still hope," said Kate, softly. "Let us hope that one so dear to us all, may be left here. You are better now. I'll join you again presently." And with noiseless footsteps she stole up the stairs. As she came to the door she halted and pressed her hands to her heart, as if in pain. There was a low murmuring sound, as if of voices, from within, and Kate turned away and sat down on the stairs.

Within the sick-room a subdued light came, and a soft air, mild and balmy, for the rose-trees and the jessamine clustered over the window and mingled their blossoms across it. Mary had just awoke from a short sleep, and lay with her hand clasped within that of a large and white-haired man at the bedside.

"What a good, kind doctor," said she, faintly; "I'm sure to find you ever beside me when I awake."

"Oh, darlin', dear," broke in old Catty, "sure you ought to know who he is. Sure it's your own——"

"Hush! be silent," muttered the old man, in a low, stern voice.

"Is it Tuesday to-day?" asked Mary, softly.

"Yes, dear, Tuesday," said the old man.

"It was on Thursday my poor uncle died. Could I live till Thursday, doctor?"

The old man tried to speak, but could not.

"You are afraid to shock me," said she, with a faint attempt to smile, "but if you knew how happy I am— happy even to leave a life I loved so well. It never could have been the same again, though—the spell was breaking, hardship and hunger were maddening them—who knows to what counsels they'd have listened soon! Tell Harry to be kind to them, won't you? Tell him not to trust to others, but to know them himself; to go, as I have done, amongst them. They'll love him *so* for doing it. He is a man, young, rich, and high-hearted—how they'll dote upon him! Catty used to say it was my father they'd have worshipped; but that was in flattery to me, Catty, you always said we were so like——"

"Oh dear! oh dear! why won't you tell her?" broke in Catty. But a severe gesture from the old man again checked her words.

"How that wild night at sea dwells in my thoughts! I never sleep but to dream of it. Cousin Harry must not forget those brave fellows. I have nothing to requite them with. I make no will, doctor," said she, smiling, "for my only legacy is that nosegay there. Will you keep it for my sake?"

The old man hid his face, but his strong frame shook and quivered in the agony of the moment.

"Hush!" said she, softly; "I hear voices without. Who are they"

"They're the country-people, darlin', come from Kiltimmon, and beyond Kyle-a-Noe, to ax after you. They passed the night there, most of them."

"Catty, dear, take care that you look after them, they will be hungry and famished, poor creatures. Oh, how unspeakably grateful to one's heart is this proof of feeling. Doctor, you will tell Harry how *I* loved *them* and how *they* loved *me*. Tell him, too, that this bond of affection is the safest and best of all ties. Tell him that their old love for a Martin still survives in their hearts, and it will be his own fault if he does not transmit it to his children. There's some one sobbing there without. Oh, bid them be of good heart, Catty; there is none who could go with less of loss to those behind. There—there come the great waves again before me! How my courage must have failed me to make this impression so deep. And poor Joan, and that dear fond girl who has been as a sister to me—so full of gentleness and love—Kate, where is she? No, do not call her; say that I asked for her—that I blessed her—and sent her this kiss!" She pressed a rose to her hot, parched lips as she spoke, and then closing her eyes seemed to fall off to sleep. Her breathing, at first strong and frequent, grew fainter and fainter, and her colour came and went, while her lips slightly moved, and a low, soft murmur came from them.

"She's asleep," muttered Catty, as she crouched down beside the bed.

The old man bent over the bed, and watched the calm features. He sat thus long for hours, but no change was there; he put his lips to hers, and then a sickly shuddering came over him, and a low deep groan, that seemed to rend his very heart!

Three days after, the great gateway of Cro' Martin Castle opened to admit a stately hearse drawn by six horses, all mournfully caparisoned, shaking with plumes and black-fringed drapery. Two mourning-coaches followed, and then, the massive gates were closed, and the sad pageant wound its slow course through the demesne. At the same moment another funeral was approaching the churchyard by a different road. It was a coffin borne by men bareheaded and sorrow-struck. An immense multitude followed, of every rank and age; sobs and sighs broke from them as they went. Not an eye was tearless, not a lip that did not tremble. At the head of this procession walked a small group, whose dress and bearing bespoke their class. These were Barry Martin leaning on Repton: Massingbred and the two Nelligans came behind.

The two coffins entered the churchyard at the same instant. The uncle and the niece were laid side by side in the turf! The same sacred words consigned them both to their last bed; the same second of time heard the dank reverberation that pronounced "earth" had returned "to earth." A kind of reverential awe pervaded the immense crowd during the ceremony, and if here and there a sob would burst from some overburdened heart, all the rest were silent; respecting, with a deference of true refinement, a sorrow deeper and greater than their own, they never uttered a word, but with bent-down heads stole quietly away. And now by each grave the mourners stood, silently gazing on the little mounds which typify so much of human sorrow!

Barry Martin's bronzed and weather-beaten features were a thought paler, perhaps. There was a dark shade of colour round the eyes, but on the whole the expression conveyed far more of sternness than sorrow. Such, indeed, is no uncommon form for grief to take in certain natures. There are men who regard calamity like a foe! and go out to meet it in a spirit of haughty defiance. A poor philosophy! He who accepts it as chastisement is both a braver and a better man!

Repton stood for a while beside him, not daring to interrupt his thoughts. At length he whispered a few words in his ear. Barry started suddenly, and his dark brow grew sterner and more resolute.

"Yes, Martin, you must," said Repton, eagerly, "I insist upon it. Good heavens! is it at such a time, in such a place as this, you can harbour a thought that is not forgiveness. Remember, he is poor Godfrey's son, the last of the race now." As he spoke, passing his arm within the other's, he drew him gently along, and led him to where a solitary mourner was standing beside the other grave.

Barry Martin stood erect and motionless, while Repton spoke to the young man. At first the words seemed to confuse and puzzle him, for he looked vaguely around, and passed his hand across his brow in evident difficulty.

"Did you say here, in this country? Do I understand you aright?"

"Here, in this very spot; there, standing now before you!" said Repton, as he pushed young Martin towards his uncle.

Barry held out his hand, which the young man grasped eagerly; and then, as if unable to resist his emotions longer, fell, sobbing violently, into the other's arms.

"Let us leave them for a while," said Repton, hurrying over to where Massingbred and the Nelligans were yet standing in silent sorrow.

They left the spot together without a word. Grief had its own part for each. It is not for us to say where sorrow eat deepest, or in which heart the desolation was most complete.

"I'd not have known young Martin," whispered Nelligan in Repton's ear; "he looks full twelve years older than when last I saw him."

"The fast men of this age, sir, live their youth rapidly," replied the other. "It is rarely their fortune to survive to be like me, or heaven knows what hearts they would be left with!"

While they thus talked, Massingbred and Joe Nelligan had strolled away into the wood. Neither spoke. Massingbred felt the violent trembling of the other's arm as it rested on his own, and saw a gulping effort, by which more than once he suppressed his rising emotion. For hours they thus loitered along, and at length, as they issued from the demesne, they found Repton and Mr. Nelligan awaiting them.

"Barry Martin has taken his nephew back with him to the cottage," said Repton, "and we'll not intrude upon them for the rest of the evening."

CHAPTER LXVII.

REPTON'S LAST CAUSE.

We have no right, as little have we the inclination, to inflict our reader with the details by which Barry Martin asserted and obtained his own. A suit in which young Martin assumed to be the defendant developed the whole history to the world, and proclaimed his title to the estate. It was a memorable case in many ways; it was the last brief Val Repton ever held. Never was his clear and searching intellect more conspicuous—never did he display more logical acuteness, nor trace out a difficult narrative with more easy perspicuity.

"My lords," said he, as he drew nigh the conclusion of his speech, "it would have been no ordinary satisfaction to me to close a long life of labour in these Courts by an effort which restores to an ancient name the noble heritage it had held for centuries. I should have deemed such an occasion no unfitting close to a career not altogether void of its successes; but the event has still stronger claims upon my gratitude. It enables me in all the unembellished sternness of legal proof to display to an age little credulous of much affection the force of a brother's love—the high-hearted devotion by which a man encountered a long life of poverty and privation, rather than disturb the peaceful possession of a brother.

"Romance has its own way of treating such themes, but I do not believe romance can add one feature to the simple fact of this man's self-denial.

"We should probably be lost in our speculations as to the noble motives of this sacrifice, if our attention was not called away to something infinitely finer and more exalted than even this. I mean the glorious life and martyr's death of her who has made a part of this case less like a legal investigation than the page of an affecting story. Story, do I say! Shame on the word. It is in truth and reality alone are such virtues inscribed. Fiction cannot deal with the humble materials that make up such an existence; the long hours of watching by sickness—the weary care of teaching the young—the trying disappointments to hope bravely met by fresh efforts—the cheery encouragement drawn from a heart exhausting itself to supply others. Think of a young girl—a very child in the world's wisdom—more than a man in heroism and daring, with a heart made for every high ambition, and a station that might command the highest, calmly consenting to be the friend of destitution, the companion of misery, the daily associate of every wretchedness—devoting grace that might have adorned a court to shed happiness in a cabin, and making of beauty that would have shed lustre around a palace the sunshine that pierced the gloom of a peasant's misery! Picture to yourself the hand a prince might have knelt to kiss, holding the cup to the lips of fever—fancy the form whose elegance would have fascinated, crouched down beside the embers as she spoke words of consolation or hope to some bereaved mother or some desolate orphan!

"These are not the scenes we are wont to look on here. Our cares are, unhappily, more with the wiles and snares of crafty men than with the sorrows and sufferings of the good! It is not often human nature wears its best colours in this place; the spirit of litigious contest little favours the virtues that are the best adornments of our kind. Thrice happy am I, then, that I end my day where a glorious sunset gilds its last hours—that I close my labours not in reprobating crime or stigmatising baseness, but with a full heart, thanking God that my last words are an elegy over the grave of the best of 'The Martins of Cro' Martin.'"

The inaccurate record from which we take these passages—for the only report of the trial is in a newspaper of the time—adds, that the emotion of the speaker had so far pervaded the court that the conclusion was drowned in mingled expressions of applause and sorrow; and when Repton retired, he was followed by the whole bar, eagerly pressing to take their last farewell of its honoured father.

The same column of the paper mentions that Mr. Joseph Nelligan was to have made his first motion that day as Solicitor-General, but had left the court from a sudden indisposition, and the cause was consequently deferred.

If Val Repton never again took his place in court, he did not entirely abdicate his functions. Barry Martin had determined on making a conveyance of the estate to his nephew, and the old lawyer was for several weeks busily employed in that duty. Although Merl's claim became extinguished when young Martin's right to the property was annulled, Barry Martin insisted on arrangements being made to repay him all that he had advanced—a course which Repton, with some little hesitation, at last concurred in. He urged Barry to reserve a life-interest to himself in the property, representing the various duties which more properly would fall to his lot than to that of a young and inexperienced proprietor. But he would not hear of it.

"He cannot abide the place," said Repton, when talking the matter over with Massingbred. "He is one of those men who never can forgive the locality where they have been miserable, nor the individual who has had a share in their sorrow. When he settles his account with Henderson, then he'll leave the west for ever."

"And will he still leave Henderson in his charge?" asked Jack.

"That is as it may be," said Repton, cautiously. "There is, as I understand, some very serious reckoning between them. It is the only subject on which Martin has kept mystery with me, and I do not like even to advert to it."

Massingbred pondered long over these words, without being able to make anything of them.

It might be that Henderson's conduct had involved him in some grave charge, and if so, Jack's own intentions with regard to the daughter would be burdened with fresh complications. "The steward" was bad enough, but if he turned out to be the "unjust steward——"

"I'll start for Galway to night," thought he. "I'll anticipate the discovery, whatever it be. She can no longer refuse to see me on the pretext of recent sorrow. It is now two months and more since this bereavement befel her. I can no longer combat this life of anxiety and doubt.—What can I do for you in the west, sir?" asked he of Repton, suddenly.

"Many things, my young friend," said Repton. "If you will delay your departure two days, since they are matters on which I must instruct you personally."

Massingbred gave a kind of half-consent, and the other went on to speak of the necessity for some nice diplomacy between the uncle and his nephew. "They know each other but little; they are on the verge of misunderstandings a dozen times a day. Benefits are, after all, but sorry ties between man and man. They may ratify the treaty of affection, they rarely inscribe the contract!"

"Still Martin cannot but feel that to the noblest act of his uncle's generosity he is indebted for all he possesses."

"Of course he knows, and he feels it; but who is to say whether that same consciousness is not a load too oppressive to bear. I know already, Barry Martin's suggestions as to certain changes have not been well taken, and he is eager and pressing to leave Ireland, lest anything should disturb the concord, frail as it is, between them."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Massingbred, passionately, "there is wonderfully little real good in this world—wonderfully little that can stand the test of the very basest of all motives—mere gain."

"Don't say so!" cried Repton. "Men have far better natures than you think; the fault lies in their tempers. Ay, sir, we are always entering into heavy recognisances with our passions, to do fifty things we never cared for. We have said this, we have heard the other; somebody sneered at that, and some one else agreed with him; and away we go, pitching all reason behind us, like an old shoe, and only seeking to gratify a whim, or a mere caprice, suggested by temper. Why do people maintain friendly intercourse at a distance for years, who could not pass twenty-four hours amicably under the same roof? Simply because it is their natures, and not their tempers, are in exercise."

"I scarcely can separate the two in my mind," said Jack, doubtingly.

"Can't you, sir? Why nature is your skin, temper only your great-coat." And the old lawyer laughed heartily at his own conceit. "But here comes the postman."

The double-knock had scarcely reverberated through the spacious hall when the servant entered with a letter.

"Ah! Barry Martin's hand. What have we here?" said Repton, as he ran his eyes over it. "So-so; just as I was saying this minute, only that Barry has the good sense to see it himself. 'My nephew,' he writes, 'has his own ideas on all these subjects, which are not mine; and as it is no part of my plan to hamper my gift with conditions that might impair its value, I mean to leave this at once.

"'I have had my full share of calamity since I set foot in this land, and if this rugged old nature could be crushed by mere misfortune, the last two months might have done it. But no, Repton, the years by which we survive friends serve equally to make us survive affections, and we live on, untouched by time!

"'I mean to be with you this evening. Let us dine alone together, for I have much to say to you.

"'Yours ever,
"'BARRY MARTIN.

"'I hope I may see Massingbred before I sail. I'd like to shake hands with him once again. Say so to him at all events.'

"Come in to-morrow to breakfast," said Repton; "by that time we'll have finished all mere business affairs." And Massingbred having assented, they parted.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

TOWARDS THE END.

Repton was standing at his parlour window, anxiously awaiting his friend's arrival, when the chaise with four posters came to the door. "What have we here?" said the old lawyer to himself, as Barry assisted a lady dressed in deep mourning to alight, and hurried out to receive them.

"I have not come alone, Repton," said the other. "I have brought my daughter with me." Before Repton could master his amazement at these words, she had thrown back her veil, revealing the well-known features of Kate Henderson.

"Is this possible?—is this really the case?" cried Repton, as he grasped her hand between both his own. "Do I, indeed, see one I have so long regarded and admired, as the child of my old friend?"

"Fate that dealt me so many heavy blows of late, had a kindness in reserve for me, after all," said Barry. "I am not to be quite alone in this world!"

"If *you* be grateful, what ought not to be *my* thankfulness?" said Kate, tremulously.

"Leave us for a moment together, Kate," said Barry. And taking Repton's arm he led him into an inner room.

"I have met with many a sore cut from fortune, Repton," said he, in the fierce tone that was most natural to him, "the nearest and dearest to me not the last to treat me harshly. I need not tell you how I have been requited in life; not, indeed, that I seek to acquit myself of my own share of ill. My whole career has been a fault; it could not bring other fruit than misery." He paused, and for a while seemed labouring in strong emotions. At last he went on:

"When that girl was born—it was two years before I married—I entrusted the charge of her to Henderson, who placed her with a sister of his in Bruges. I made arrangements for her maintenance and education—liberally for one as poor as I was. I made but one condition about her: it was, that under no circumstances, save actual want, should she ever be reduced to earn her own bread; but if the sad hour did come, never—as had been her poor mother's fate—never as a governess! It was in that fearful struggle of condition I first knew her. I continued, year after year, to hear of her; remitting regularly the sums I promised—doubling, tripling them, when fortune favoured me with a chance prosperity. The letters spoke of her as well and happy, in humble, but sufficient circumstances, equally remote from privation as from the seductions of a more exalted state. I insisted eagerly on my original condition, and hoped some day to hear of her being married to some honest, but humble man. It was not often that I had time for self-reproach; but when such seasons would beset me, I thought of this girl, and her poor mother long dead and gone—— But let me finish. While I struggled—and it was often a hard struggle—to maintain my side of the compact, selling at ruinous loss acquisitions it had cost me years of labour to obtain, this fellow, this Henderson, was basely betraying the trust I placed in him! The girl, for whose protection, whose safety I was toiling, was thrown by him into the very world for which I had distinctly excepted her; her talents, her accomplishments, her very graces, farmed out and hired for his own profit! Launched into the very sea where her own mother met shipwreck, she was, a mere child, sent to thread her way through the perils of the most dissipated society. Hear her own account of it, Repton. Let *her* tell you what is the tone of that high life to which foreign nobility imparts its fascinations. Not that I want to make invidious comparisons; our own country sends its high tributaries to every vice of Europe! I know not what accident saved her amidst this pollution. Some fancied theory of popular wrongs, she thinks, gave her a kind of factitious heroism; elevating her, at least to her own mind, above the frivolous corruptions around her. She was a democrat, to rescue her from being worse.

"At last came a year of unusual pressure; my remittance was delayed; but when sent was never acknowledged. From that hour out, I never heard of her. How she came into my brother's family, you yourself know. What was her life there, she has told me! Not in any spirit of complaint—nay, she acknowledges to many kindnesses and much trust. Even my cold sister-in-law showed traits, for which I had not given her credit. I have already forgotten her wrongs towards myself, in requital of her conduct to this poor girl."

"I'll spare you the scene with Henderson, Repton," said he, after a long pause. "When the fellow told me that the girl was the same I had seen watching by another's sick-bed, that she it was whose never-ceasing cares had soothed the last hours of one dearer than herself, I never gave another thought to him. I rushed out in search of her, to tell her myself the tidings."

"How did she hear it?" asked Repton, eagerly.

"More calmly than I could tell it. Her first words were, 'Thank God for this, for I never could love that man I had called my father!'"

"She knows then, every circumstance of her birth?"

"I told her everything. We know each other as well as though we had lived under the same roof for years. She is my own child in every sentiment and feeling. She is frank and fearless, Repton—two qualities that will do well enough in the wild Savannahs of the New World, but would be unmanageable gifts in the Old, and thither we are bound. I have written to Liverpool about a ship, and we shall sail on Saturday."

"How warmly do I sympathise in this your good fortune, Martin," said Repton. "She is a noble creature, and worthy of belonging to you."

"I ask for nothing more, Repton," said he, solemnly. "Fortune and station, such as they exist here, I have no mind for! I'm too old now to go to school about party tactics and politics; I'm too stubborn, besides, to yield up a single conviction for the sake of unity with a party—so much for my unfitness for public life. As to private, I am rough and untrained; the forms of society, so pleasant to others, would be penalties to *me*. And then," said he, rising, and drawing up his figure to its full height, "I love the forest and the prairie; I glory in the vastness of a landscape, where the earth seems boundless as the sky, and where, if I hunt down a buffalo-ox, after twenty miles of a chase, I have neither a game-law nor a gamekeeper, nor a charge of trespass hanging over me."

"There's some one knocking at the door," said Repton, as he arose and opened it.

"A thousand pardons for this interruption," said Massingbred.

in a low and eager voice, "but I cannot keep my promise to you; I cannot defer my journey to the west. I start to-night. Don't ask me the reasons. I'll be free enough to give them if they justify me."

"But here is one who wishes to shake hands with you, Massingbred," said Repton, as he led him forward into the room.

"I hope you are going to keep your pledge with me, though," said Barry. "Have you forgotten you have promised to be my guest over the sea?"

"Ah!" said Jack, sighing, "I've had many a day-dream of late."

"The man's in love," said Repton. "Nay, prisoner, you are not called on to say what may criminate you. I'll tell you what, Barry, you'll do the boy good service by taking him along with you. There's a healthful sincerity in the active life of the New World well fitted to dispel illusions that take their rise in the indolent voluptuousness of the old. Carry him off then, I say; accept no excuses nor apologies. Send him away to buy powder and shot, leather gaiters, and the rest of it. When I saw him first myself it was in the character of a poacher, and he filled the part well. Ah! he is gone," added he, perceiving that Martin had just quitted the room. "Poor fellow, he is so full of his present happiness—the first gleam of real sunshine on a long day of lowering gloom! he has just found a daughter—an illegitimate one—but worthy to be the rightful-born child to the first man in the land. The discovery has carried him back twenty years of life, and freshened a heart whose wells of feeling were all but dried up for ever. If I mistake not, you must have met her long ago at Cro' Martin."

"Possibly. I have no recollection of it," said Jack, musing.

"An ignoble confession, sir," said Repton; "no less shocked should I be were she to tell me she was uncertain if she had ver met Mr. Massingbred. As Burke once remarked to me, 'Active intelligences, like appropriate ingredients in chemistry, never meet without fresh combinations.' It is then a shame to ignore such products. I'd swear that when you did meet you understood each other thoroughly: agreed well—ay, and what is more to the purpose, differed in the right places, too."

"I'm certain we did," said Jack, smiling, "though I'm ungrateful enough to forget all about it."

"Well," said Martin, entering, "I have sent for another advocate to plead my cause. My daughter will tell you, sir, that she at least is not afraid to encounter the uncivilised glens beside the Orinoco. Come in, Kate. You tell me that you and Mr. Massingbred are old friends."

Massingbred started as he heard the name, looked up, and there stood Kate before him, with her hand extended in welcome.

"Good heavens! what is this? Am I in a dream? Can this be real?" cried Jack, pressing his hands to his temples, and trembling from head to foot in the intensity of his anxiety.

"My father tells me of an invitation he has given you, Mr. Massingbred," said she, smiling faintly at his embarrassment, "and asks me to repeat it; but I know far better than he does all that you would surrender by exile from the great world wherein you are destined to eminence. The great debater, the witty conversationalist, the smart reviewer, might prove but a sorry trapper, and even a bad shot! I have my scruples, then, about supporting a cause where my conscience does not go along with me."

"My head on't, but he'll like the life well," said Barry, half impatiently.

"Am I to think that you will not ask me to be your guest?" said Jack, in a whisper, only audible by Kate.

"I have not said so," said she, in the same low tone.

"Will you go further, Kate," muttered he, in tremulous eagerness, "and say, 'Come?'"

"Yes!" said she. "Come!"

"I accept!" cried Jack, rushing over, and grasping Martin's hands between his own. "I'm ready—this hour, this instant, if you like it."

"We find the prisoner guilty, my lords," said Repton; "but we recommend him to mercy, as his manner on this occasion convinces us it is a first offence."

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We have now done with the Martins of Cro' Martin. Should any of our readers feel a curiosity as to the future fortunes of the estate, its story, like that of many another Irish property, is written in the Encumbered Estates Court. Captain Martin only grew wiser by the especial experience of one class of difficulties. His indolent, easy disposition, and a taste for expense led him once again into embarrassments, from which there was but one issue—the sale of his property. He has still, however, a handsome subsistence remaining, and lives with Lady Dorothea, notable and somewhat distinguished residents of a city on the Continent.

We cannot persuade ourselves that we have inspired interest for the humbler characters of our piece. Nor dare we ask the reader to hear more about Mrs. Cronan and her set, nor learn how Kilkieran fared in the changes around it.

For Joseph Nelligan, however, we claim a parting word. He was the first of an order of men who have contributed no small share to the great social revolution of Ireland in late years. With talents fully equal to the best in the opposite scale of party, and a character above all reproach, he stood a rebuking witness to all the taunts and sarcasms once indiscrimately levelled at his class; and, at the same time, inspired his own party with the happy knowledge, that there was a nobler and more legitimate road to eminence than by factious display and popular declamation.

We do not wish to enquire how far the one great blow to his happiness—the disappointment of his early life—contributed to his success by concentrating his ambition on his career. Certain is it, no man achieved a higher or more rapid elevation, and old Dan lived to receive at his board the Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench in the person of his own son.

Poor Simmy Crow! for if we would forget him, he has taken care that oblivion is not to be his fate. He has sent from the Rocky Mountains, where he is now wandering with Barry Martin, some sketches of Indian Life to the Irish Art-Exhibition.

If it be a pleasure to trace in our friends the traits we have admired in them in youth, and remark the embers of the fires that once warmed their hearts, Simmy affords us this gratification, since his drawings reveal the inspirations that first filled his early mind. The Chief in his war paint has a fac-simile likeness to his St. John in the Wilderness; and as for the infant the squaw is bathing in the stream, we can produce twelve respectable witnesses to depose that it is "Moses."

We are much tempted to add a word about the Exiles themselves, but we abstain. It is enough to say, that all the attractive prospects of ambition held out by friends—all the seductions of generous offers from family, have never tempted them to return to the Old World; but that they live on happily, far away from the jarring collisions of life, the tranquil existence they had longed for.

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